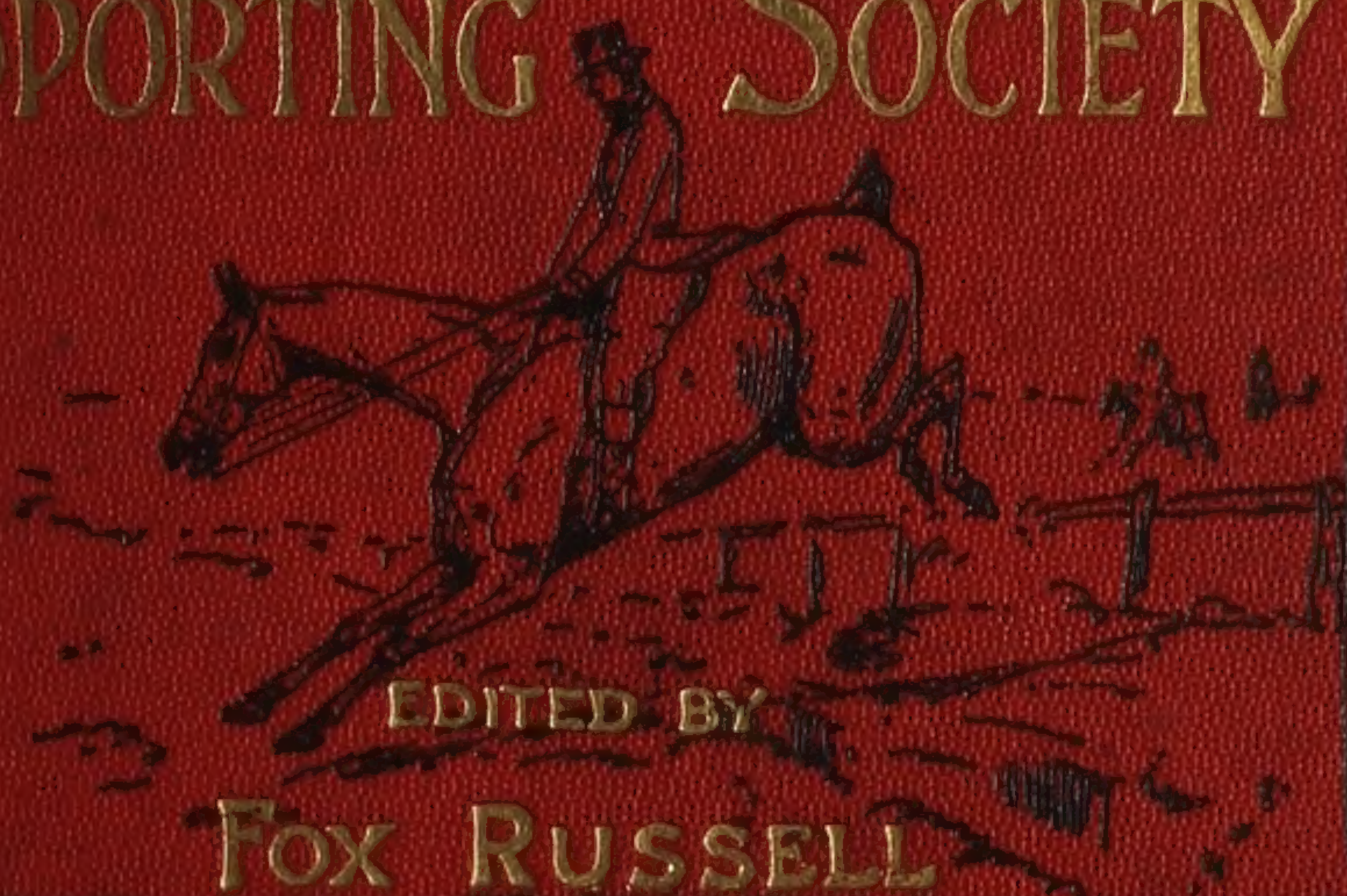




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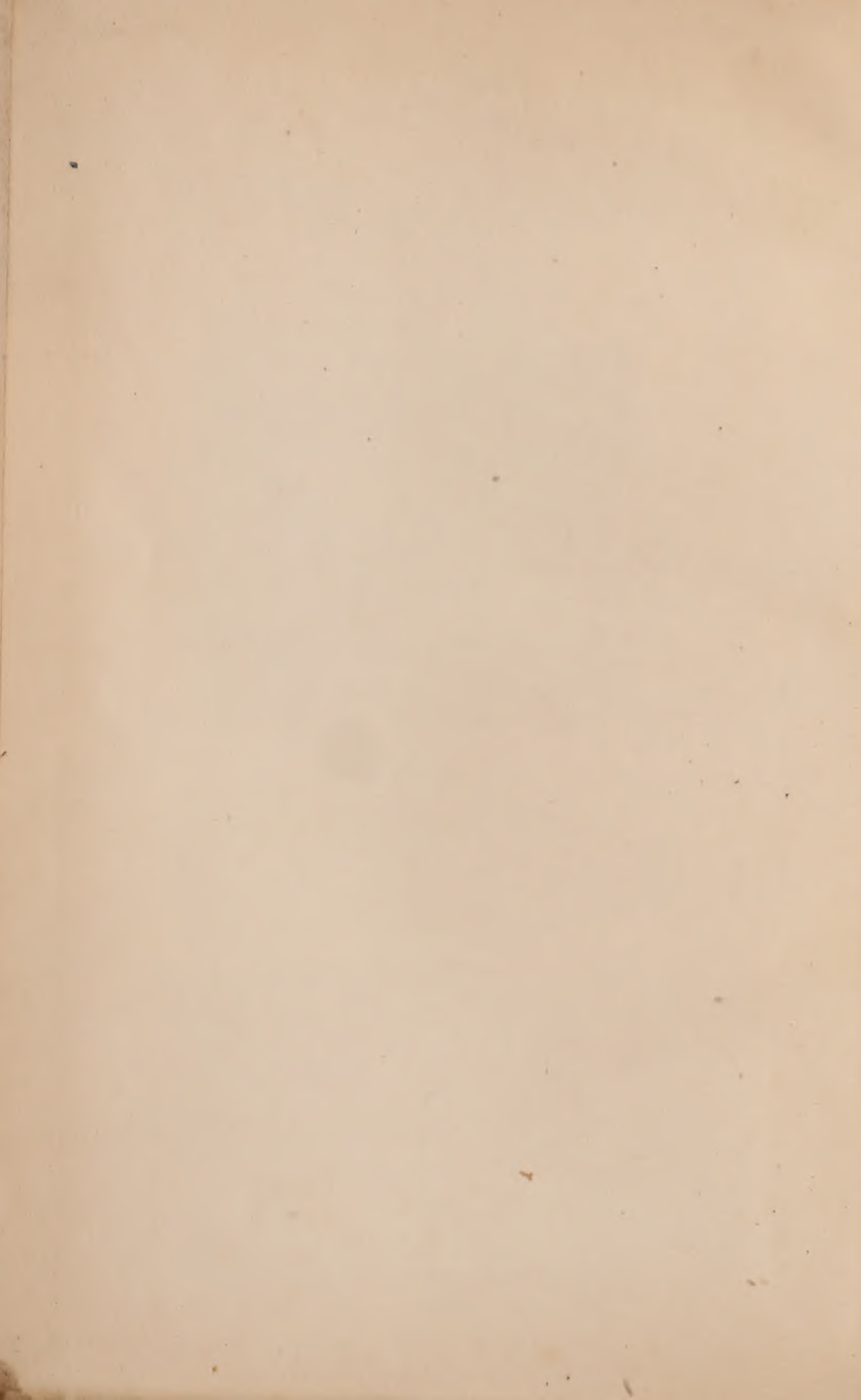




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*IN TWO VOLUMES—VOL. I.*

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\* \* \* "THE DEAD HEAT," by "OLD CALABAR," was originally contributed by the veteran sportsman to the pages of "BAILY'S Magazine," and is here reproduced by the permission of the Proprietors.



## THE INFLUENCE OF FIELD SPORTS ON CHARACTER

FIELD sports have been generally considered solely in the light of a relaxation from the graver business of life, and have been justified by writers on economies on the ground that some sort of release is required from the imprisoned existence of the man of business, the lawyer, or the politician. Apollo does not always bend his bow, it is said, and timely dissipation is commendable even in the wise ; therefore by all means, let the sports which we English love be pursued within legitimate bounds, and up to an extent not forbidden by weightier considerations.

But there seems to be somewhat more in field sports than is contained in this criticism. The influence *of* character on the manner in which sports are pursued is endless, and reciprocally the influence of field sports *on* character seems to deserve some attention. The best narrator of schoolboy life of the present day has said that, varied as are the characters of boys, so varied are their ways of facing or not facing a "hilly," at football ; and one of the greatest observers of character in England



has written a most instructive and amusing account of the way in which men enjoy fox-hunting. If, therefore, a man's character and his occupations and tastes exercise a mutual influence upon each other, it follows that while men of different dispositions pursue sports in different ways, the sports also which they do pursue will tell considerably in the development of their natural character.

Now, the field sport which is perhaps pursued by a greater number of Englishmen than any other, and which is most zealously admired by its devotees, is fox-hunting. It is essentially English in its nature.

“A fox-hunt to a foreigner is strange,  
 'Tis likewise subject to the double danger  
 Of falling first, and having in exchange  
 Some pleasant laughter at the awkward stranger.”

And it is this very falling which adds in some degree to its popularity; *saure mari magno*, it is pleasant to know that your neighbour A's horse, which he admires so much, has given him a fall at that very double over which your little animal has carried you so safely; and it is pleasant to feel yourself secure from the difficulties entailed on B, by his desire to teach his four-year-old how to jump according to his tastes. But apart from this delight—uncharitable if you like to call it—which is felt at the hazards and failures of another, there



is in fox-hunting the keenest possible desire to overcome satisfactorily these difficulties yourself. Not merely for the sake of explaining to an after-dinner audience how you jumped that big place by the church or led the field safely over the brook, though that element does enter in; but from the strong delight which an Englishman seems by birthright to have in surmounting any obstacles which are placed in his way. Put a man then on a horse, and send him out hunting, and when he has had some experience ask him what he has discovered of the requirements of his new pursuit, and what is the lesson or influence of it. He will probably give you some such answer as the following.

The first thing that is wanted by, and therefore encouraged by, fox-hunting, is decision. He who hesitates is lost. No "craner" can get well over a country. Directly the hounds begin to run, he who would follow them must decide upon his course. Will he go through that gate, or attempt that big fence, which has proved a stopper to the crowd? there is no time to lose. The fence may necessitate a fall, the gate must cause a loss of time, which shall it be? Or again, the hounds have come to a check, the master and huntsmen are not up (in some countries a very possible event), and it devolves upon the only man who is with them to give them a cast. Where is it to be?



here or there? There is no time for thought, prompt and decided action alone succeeds. Or else the loss of shoe or an unexpected fall has thrown you out, and you must decide quickly in which direction you think the hounds are most likely to have run. Experience, of course, tells considerably here as everywhere; but quick decision and promptitude in adopting the course decided on will be the surest means of attaining the wished for result of finding yourself again in company with the hounds.

Further, fox-hunting teaches immensely self-dependence; every one is far too much occupied with his own ideas and his own difficulties to be able to give more than the most momentary attention to those of his neighbour. If you seek advice or aid you will not get much from the really zealous sportsman; you must trust to yourself, you must depend on your own resources. "Go on, sir, or else let me come," is the sort of encouragement which you are likely to get, if in doubt whether a fence is practicable or a turn correct.

Thirdly, fox-hunting necessitates a combination of judgment and courage removed from timidity on the one side and foolhardiness on the other. The man who takes his horse continually over big places, for the sake of doing that in which he hopes no one else will successfully imitate him, is sure



in the end to kill his horse or lose his chance of seeing the run; and on the other hand, he who, when the hounds are running, shirks an awkward fence or leaves his straight course to look for a gate, is tolerably certain to find himself several fields behind at the finish. "What sort of a man to hounds is Lord A——?" we once heard it asked of a good judge. "Oh, a capital sportsman and rider," was the answer; "never larks, but will go at a haystack if the hounds are running."

It is partly from the necessity of self-dependence which the fox-hunter feels, that his sport is open to the accusation that it tends to selfishness. The true fox-hunter is alone in the midst of the crowd; he has his own interests solely at heart—each for himself, is his motto, and the pace is often too good for him to stop and help a neighbour in a ditch, or catch a friend's runaway horse. He has no partner, he plays no one's hand except his own. This of course only applies to the man who goes out hunting, eager to have a run and keen to be in at the death. If a man rides to the meet with a pretty cousin, and pilots her for the first part of a run, he probably pays more attention to his charge than to his own instincts of the chase; but he is not on this occasion purely fox-hunting; and, if a true Nimrod, his passion for sport will overcome his gallantry, and he will probably not be sorry



when his charge has left his protection, and he is free to ride where his individual wishes and the exigencies of the hunt may lead him.

What a knowledge of country fox-hunting teaches! A man who hunts will, at an emergency, be far better able than one who does not to choose a course, and select a line, which will lead him right. Generals hold that the topographical instinct of the fox-hunter is of considerable advantage in the battle-field; and it is undoubtedly easy to imagine circumstances in which a man accustomed to find his way to or from hounds, in spite of every opposition and difficulty, will make use of the power which he has acquired and be superior to the man who has not had similar advantages.

Finally, fox-hunting encourages energy and "go." The sluggard or lazy man never succeeds as a fox-hunter, and he who adopts the chase as an amusement soon finds that he must lay aside all listlessness and inertness if he would enjoy to the full the pleasures which he seeks. A man who thinks a long ride to cover, or a jog home in a chill, dank evening in November, a bore, will not do as a fox-hunter. The activity which considers no distance too great, no day too bad for hunting, will contribute first to the success of the sportsman, and ultimately to the formation of the character of the man.



Fishing teaches perseverance. The man in *Punch*, who on Friday did not know whether he had had good sport, because he only began on Wednesday morning, is a caricature; but, like all caricatures, has an element of truth in it. To succeed as an angler, whether of the kingly salmon, or the diminutive gudgeon, an ardour is necessary which is not damped by repeated want of success; and he who is hopeless because he has no sport at first will never fully appreciate fishing. So too the tyro, who catches his line in a rock, or twists it in an apparently inexplicable manner in a tree, soon finds that steady patience will set him free far sooner than impetuous vigour or ruthless strength. The skilled angler does not abuse the weather or the water in impotent despair, but makes the most of the resources which he has, and patiently hopes an improvement therein.

Delicacy and gentleness are also taught by fishing. It is here especially that—

“Vis consili expers mole ruit suâ,  
Vim temperatam di quoque provehunt in majus.”

Look at the thin link of gut and the slight rod with which the huge trout or “never ending monster of a salmon” is to be caught. No brute force will do there, every struggle of the prey must be met by judicious yielding on the part of the captor, who



watches carefully every motion, and treats its weight by giving line, knowing at the same time—none better—when the full force of the butt is to be unflinchingly applied. Does not this sort of training have an effect on character? Will not a man educated in fly-fishing find developed in him the tendency to be patient, to be persevering, and to know how to adapt himself to circumstances. Whatever be the fish he is playing, whatever be his line, will he not know when to yield and when to hold fast?

But fishing like hunting is solitary. The zealot among fishermen will generally prefer his own company to the society of lookers-on, whose advice may worry him, and whose presence may spoil his sport. The salmon-fisher does not make much of a companion of the gillie who goes with him, and the trouterman does best when absolutely alone; and nothing is so apt to prove a tyrant, and an evil one, as the love of solitude.

On the other hand, the angler is always under the influence, and able to admire the beauties of nature. Whether he be upon the crag-bound loch or by the sides of the laughing burn of highland countries, or prefer the green banks of southern rivers, he can enjoy to the full the many pleasures which existence alone presents to those who admire nature. And all this exercises a softening in-



fluence on his character. Read the works of those who write on fishing—Scrope, Walton, Davy, as instances. Is there not a very gentle spirit breathing through them? What is there rude or coarse or harsh in the true fisherman? Is he not light and delicate, and do not his words and actions fall as softly as his flies?

Shooting is of two kinds, which, without incorrectness, may be termed wild and tame. Of tame shooting the tamest, in every sense of the word, is pigeon-shooting; but as this is admittedly not sport, and as its principal feature is that it is a medium for gambling, or, at least, for the winning of money prizes or silver cups, it may be passed over in a few words. It undoubtedly requires skill, and encourages rapidity of eye and quickness of action; but its influence on character depends solely on its essential selfishness, and the taint which it bears from the "filthy" effect of "lucre."

Other tame shooting is battue shooting, where luxuriously clad men, who have breakfasted at any hour between ten and twelve, and have been driven to their coverts in a comfortable conveyance, stand in a sheltered corner with cigarettes in their mouths, and shoot tame pheasants and timid hares for about three hours and a half, varying the entertainment by a hot lunch, and a short walk from beat to beat. Two men stand behind each sportsman with breech-



loaders of the quickest action, and the only drawback to the gunner's satisfaction is that he is obliged to waste a certain time between his shots in cocking the gun which he has taken from his loader. This cannot but be enervating in its influence. Everything, except the merest action of pointing the piece and pulling the trigger, is done for you. You are conveyed probably to the very place where you are to stand; the game is driven right up to you; what you shoot is picked up for you; your gun itself is loaded by other hands; you have no difficulty in finding your prey; you have no satisfaction in outwitting the wiliness of bird or beast; you have nothing whatever except the pleasure—minimised by constant repetition—of bringing down a "rocketter," or stopping a rabbit going full speed across a ride.

The moral of this is that it is not necessary to do anything for yourself, that some one will do everything for you, probably better than you would, and that all you have to do is to leave everything to some person whom you trust. Or, again, it is, get the greatest amount of effect with the least possible personal exertion. Stand still, and opportunities will come to you like pheasants—all you have to do is to knock them over.

But it is not so with wild-shooting. Not so



with the man, who, with the greatest difficulty, and after studying every available means of approach, has got within range of the lordly stag, and hears the dull thud which tells him his bullet has not missed its mark. Nor with him, who, after a hurried breakfast, climbs hill after hill in pursuit of the russet grouse, or mounts to the top of a craggy ridge in search of the snowy ptarmigan. Not so either with him, who traverses every bit of marshy ground along a low bottom, and is thoroughly gratified, if, at the end of a long day, he has bagged a few snipe; nor with him, who, despite cold and gloom and wet, has at last drawn his punt within distance of a flock of wild duck. In each of these, endurance and energy is taught in its fullest degree. It is no slight strain on the muscles and lungs to follow Ronald in his varied course, in which he emulates alternately the movements of the hare, the crab, and the snake; and it is no slight trial of patience to find, after all your care, all your wearisome stalk, that some unobserved hind, or unlucky grouse, has frightened your prey and rendered your toil vain. But, *en avant*, do not despair, try again, walk your long walk, crawl your difficult crawl once more, and then, your perseverance rewarded by a royal head, agree that deer-stalking is calculated to develop a



character which overcomes all difficulties, and goes on in spite of many failures.

The same obstinate determination which is found in this, the *beau idéal* of all shooting, is found similarly in shooting of other kinds; and it is a question whether to the endurance inculcated by this pursuit may not be attributed that part of an Englishman's character which made the Peninsular heroes "never know when they were licked."

It is objected by foreigners to many of our national sports that they involve great disregard for animal life. "Let us go out and kill something," they say, is the exhortation of an Englishman to his friend when they wish to amuse themselves. Sport consists, they hold, in slaughter; sport therefore is cruel, and teaches contempt for the feelings of creatures lower than ourselves in the scale of existence. I do not wish to enter into this question, which has been a source of considerable controversy; but I would say three things in reference to it. First, that it is difficult to answer the question, Why should man be an exception to the rule of instinct—undoubtedly prevalent throughout the world—which leads every animal to prey upon its inferior? Secondly, that every possible arrangement is made by man for the comfort and safety of his prey—salmon, foxes, pheasants or stags—until the actual moment of



capture, and that every fair chance of escape is given to it; and thirdly, that whatever the premises may be, the conclusion remains, that there is no race so far removed from carelessness of animal life and happiness as the English.

There are, however, other field sports which do not involve any destruction of life, and which, from the general way in which they are pursued, may fairly be called national. Foremost amongst these is racing.

Were racing freed from any influence, other than that which distinguished the races of past epochs, the desire of success; were the prize a crown of parsley or of laurel, and the laudable desire of victory the only inducement to contention, the effect on the men who are devoted to it could not be otherwise than for good. In modern racing, however, the element of pecuniary gain comes in so strongly, that the worst points of the human character are stimulated by it instead of the best, and the improvement of horseflesh and the breed of horses is sacrificed to the temporary advantage of owners of horses. To say, now, that a man is going on the turf, is to say, that he had almost be better under it; and though a few exceptional cases are found, in which men persistently keeping race horses have maintained their independence and strict integrity in spite of the many temptations with which they are assailed,



yet, even they, have probably done so at the sacrifice of openness of confidence and perhaps of friendship. Trust no one is the motto of turfites. Keep the key of your saddle-room yourself; let no one, not even your trainer, see your weights. Pay your jockey the salary of a judge, and then have no security that he will not deceive you. The state of the turf is like the state of Coreycra of old. Every man thinks, that unless he is actually plotting against somebody, he is in danger of being plotted against himself, and that the only safety he has lies in taking the initiative in deceit. The sole object is to win—

“Rem

*Si possis recte, si non quocunque modo rem.”*

Take care you are not cheated yourself, and make the most of any knowledge of which you believe yourself to be the sole possessor.

What is the result of such a pursuit? what its moral? The destruction of all generosity, all trust in others, all large-mindedness: and the encouragement instead, of selfishness, of extravagance, and of suspicion.

The man whose friendship was warm and generous, who would help his friend to the limit of his powers, goes on the turf and becomes warped and narrow, labouring, apparently, always under the suspicion, that those whom he meets are trying,



or wish to try, to get the better of him, or share, in some way, the advantages which he hopes his cunning has acquired for himself.

A thorough disregard for truth, too, is taught by horse-racing; not, perhaps, instanced always by the affirmation of falsehood, but negatively by the concealment or distortion of fact. An owner seldom allows even his best friend to know the result of his secret trials, and in some notable cases such results are kept habitually locked in the breast of one man, who fears to have a confidant, and doubts the integrity of everyone. Whether this is a state of things which can be altered, either by diminishing the number of race-meetings in England, or by discouraging or even putting down betting, I have no wish to consider; but that the present condition of horse-racing and its surroundings is very far removed from being a credit to the country, I venture to affirm.

Cricket is another field sport, the popularity of which has rapidly increased; partly from the entire harmlessness which characterises it, and leads to the encouragement of it by schoolmasters and clergymen, and partly from the fact that it is played in the open air, in fine weather, and in the society of a number of companions. I do not propose to inquire whether there is benefit in the general spreading of cricket through the country,



or whether it may not be said that it occupies too much time and takes men away from other more advantageous occupations, or whether the combination of amateur and professional skill which is found in great matches is a good thing; but I wish, briefly, to point out one or two points in human nature which seem to me to be developed by cricket.

The first of these is hero-worship. The best player in a village club, and the captain of a school eleven, if not for other reasons unusually unpopular, is surrounded by a halo of glory which falls to the successful in no other sport. Great things are expected of him, he is looked upon with admiring eyes, and is indeed a great man. "Ah, it is all very well," you hear, "but wait till Brown goes in, Smith and Robinson are out, but wait till Brown appears, then you will see how we shall beat you, bowl him out if you can." His right hand will atone for the shortcomings of many smaller men, his prowess make up the deficiency of his side. Or look at a match between All England and twenty-two of Clodshire, watch the clodsmen between the innings, how they throng wonderingly round the chiefs of the eleven. That's him, that's Abel, wait till he takes the bat, then you'll "see summut like play." Or go to the "Bat and Ball" after the match, when the eleven are there, and see how their words are dwelt on by an admiring audi-



ence, and their very looks and demeanour made much of as the deliberate expressions of men great in their generation. Again, see the reception at Kennington Oval of a "Surrey pet" or a popular amateur, or the way in which "W. G." Grace is treated by the undemonstrative aristocracy of "Lord's," and agree with me that cricket teaches hero-worship in its full. What power the captain of the Eton or the Winchester eleven has, what an influence over his fellows, not merely in the summer when his deeds are before the public, but always from a memory of his prowess with bat or ball. There is one awkward point about this; there are many cricket clubs, and therefore many captains, and when two of these meet a certain amount of difficulty arises in choosing which is the hero to be worshipped. In a match where the best players of a district are collected, and two or more good men, known in their own circle and esteemed highly, there play together, who is to say which is the best; who is to crown the real king of Brentford? Each considers himself superior to the other, each remembers the plaudits of his own admirers, forgets that it is possible that they may be prejudiced, and ignores the reputation of his neighbour. The result is a jealousy among the chieftains which is difficult to be overcome, and which shows itself even in the best matches.



On the other hand, the effect of this hero-worship which I have described, is to produce a harmony and unity of action consequent on confidence in a leader which is peculiar to cricket. Watch a good eleven, a good university or public school team, and see how thoroughly they work together, how the whole eleven is like one machine, "point" trusting "coverpoint," "short slip" knowing that if he cannot reach a ball, "long slip" can, and the bowler feeling sure that his "head" balls, if hit up, will be caught, if hit along the ground, will be fielded. Or see two good men batting, when every run is of importance, how they trust one another's judgment as to the possibility of running, how thoroughly they act in unison. Such training as this teaches greatly a combination of purpose and of action, and a confidence in the judgment of one's colleagues which must be advantageous.

The good cricketer is obedient to his captain, does what he is told, and does not grumble if he thinks his skill underrated: the tyro, proud of his own prowess, will indeed be cross if he is not made enough of, or is sent in last; but the good player, who really knows the game, sees that one leader is enough, and obeys his orders accordingly.

There are other lessons taught by cricket, such as caution by batting, patience and care by bowling,



and energy by fielding; but I have no space to dwell on these, as I wish to examine very briefly one more sport, which, though hardly national, is yet much loved by the considerable number who do pursue it. Boating is seen in its glory at the universities or in some of the suburbs of London which are situated on the Thames. It is also practised in some of the northern towns, especially Newcastle, where the Tynesiders have long enjoyed a great reputation.

By boating, I do not mean going out in a large tub, and sitting under an awning, being pulled by a couple of paid men or drawn by an unfortunate horse, but boat-racing, for prizes or for honour. The Oxford and Cambridge race has done more than anything to make this sport popular, and the thousands who applaud the conquerors, reward sufficiently the exertions which have been necessary to make the victory possible.

The chief lesson which rowing teaches is self denial. The university oar, or the member of the champion crew at Henley, has to give up many pleasures, and deny himself many luxuries, before he is in a fit state to row with honour to himself and his club; and though in the dramatist's excited imagination the stroke-oar of an Oxford eight may spend days and nights immediately before the race, in the society of a



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Formosa, such is not the case in real life. There must be no pleasant chats over a social pipe for the rowing man, no dinners at the Mitre or the Bull, no *recherche* breakfasts with his friends; the routine of training must be strictly observed, and everything must give way to the paramount necessity of putting on muscle. In the race itself, too, what a desperate strain there is on the powers! How many times has some sobbing oarsman felt that nature must succumb to the tremendous demand made on her, that he can go no further; and then has come the thought that others are concerned besides himself, that the honour of his university or his club are at stake, which has lent a new stimulus and made possible that final spurt which results in victory.

The habits taught by rowing, whether during training or after the race has commenced, lead to regularity of life, to abstemiousness, and to the avoidance of unwholesome tastes, and their effect is seen long after the desire for aquatic glory have passed away.

Such are some of the most prominent influences of English field sports, and as long as amusements requiring such energy, such physical or mental activity, and such endurance as fox-hunting, stalking, and cricket, are popular, there is little fear of the manly character of the English nation deteriorating, or its indomitable determination being weakened.



## OLD-FASHIONED ANGLING

ANGLING is, I think, one of the most popular of British field sports ; certainly, for one book written about any other kind, there must be half-a-dozen on the subject of fishing. I met lately with a most amusing old book on the "Art of Angling," published in 1801 ; and illustrated with very quaint old wood engravings of both fresh and sea water fish. It commences with a long anatomical and physiological description of fish, giving an account of their habits, method of feeding, &c. For this last the author draws considerably on his own imagination. For instance, he declares that mussels and oysters open their shells for the purpose of catching crabs, closing them when one creeps in, and thus securing their prey. The oyster also is declared to change sides with each tide, lying with the flat shell uppermost one time, and the convex the next. After this the author goes regularly through the alphabet, treating everything connected with fresh-water angling under its respective initial letter.

I suppose that at this time there were few, if



any tackle shops, for most elaborate directions are given for making lines. These were to be of horse hair, and twisted in a "twisting instrument," whatever that was. The hair was to be with the top of one to the tail of the other, so that every part might be equally strong, and turned slowly, so as to allow it "to bed" properly; the different lengths were to be tied together either "by a water knot, or Dutch knot, or a weaver's." The line was to taper, beginning with three hairs down to a single one, where the hook was whipped on.

The rod, as a matter of the greatest importance, is duly treated. The wood was to be procured between the middle of November and Christmas Day; the stock or butt to be made of ground hazel, ground ash, or ground willow, not more than two or three feet long. The wood chosen to be that which shot directly from the ground—not from any stump—and every joint beyond was to taper to a top made preferably of hazel, though yew, crab, or blackthorn might be used. If it had any knots or excrescences, which were to be avoided if possible, they must be removed with a sharp knife. Five or six inches of the top were to be cut off, and a small piece of round, smooth, taper whalebone spliced on with silk and cobbler's wax, and the whole finished with a strong noose of hair to fasten the line to. This was



for an ordinary rod ; the best sort was made as follows :—A white deal or fir board, thick, free from knots, and seven to eight feet long, was to be procured, and a dexterous joiner was to divide this with his saw into several breadths ; then with a plane to shoot them round, smooth, and rush-grown or taper. One of these would form the bottom of the rod, seven or eight feet long in the piece. To this was fastened a hazel six or seven feet long, proportioned to the fir ; this also rush-grown, and it might consist of two or three pieces, to the top of which a piece of yew was to be fixed about two feet long—round, smooth, and taper ; and, finally, a piece of round whalebone, five or six inches long. Some rings or eyes were to be placed on the rod in such a manner that when you laid your eye to one, you could see through all the rest. A wheel or winch must be fixed on, about a foot from the end of the rod, and, as a finish, a feather dipped in *aqua fortis* was passed over it, so as to make it a pure cinnamon colour. “ This,” the author adds, “ will be a curious rod if artificially worked ! ”

The subject of fly-making, and how and when to use flies, is treated most exhaustively—no less than twenty-four pages being devoted to the subject. The materials named for fly-dressing are very good indeed, and very much the same as used now ; but



when the author tries to explain the *actual* method of using them he utterly fails. Anyone who attempted to tie flies in the way explained would produce most extraordinary specimens.

The author has taken very great pains, not only in naming the flies to be used each month, but the actual time of day for them, and the hours between which they must be used. Worms for bait are described and named with great exactness, and the best way to catch and keep them, also how best to scour them previous to use. I think, however, the method recommended for scouring one kind would be too much for any but a *very* enthusiastic angler—namely, to put them in a woollen bag, and keep them in your waistcoat pocket. Few persons could stand that, I think.

Many recipes for different sorts of pastes are given, but it is hard to believe that any fish would take them—"bean flour, the tenderest part of a kitten's leg, wax and suet beaten together in a mortar," scarcely sounds alluring; neither does a mixture of "fat old cheese (the strongest rennet), suet, and turmeric," appear to be very nice. To any of these pastes you may add "assafœtida, oil of polypody of the oak, oil of ivy, or oil of Peter." Well, I do not suppose that they would make much difference.



A great number of recipes for unguents, to smear over the worms used so as to make them more attractive, are given; and most extraordinary they are:—assafoetida, three drachms; camphire, one drachm; Venice turpentine, one drachm; beaten up with oils of lavender and camomile, is one recipe. Another is, “mulberry juice, hedgehog’s fat, oil of water-lilies and oil of pennyroyal,” mixed together; but the most elaborate one is as follows:—“Take the oils of camomile, lavender, and aniseed, of each a quarter of an ounce; heron’s grease and the best of assafoetida, each two drachms; two scruples of cummin seed finely beaten to powder; Venice turpentine, camphire, and galbanum, of each a drachm; add two grains of civet and make into an unguent. This must be kept close in a glazed earthenware pot, or it loses much of its virtue; anoint your line with it and your expectation will be abundantly answered. Some anglers, however, place more confidence in a judicious choice of baits and a proper management of them, than in the most celebrated unguents.” I think the concluding paragraph is delightful. I suppose it did at length dawn on the author’s mind that people might object to carrying about such hideously stinking compositions.

The angler is told that “his apparel must not be



of a light or shining colour, but of a dark brown, fitting closely to the body, so as not to fright the fish away." The impediments to our anglers' recreation are named. "The fault may be occasioned by his tackle, as when his lines or hooks are too large, when his bait is dead or decaying. If he angles at a wrong time of day, when the fish are not in the humour of taking his bait. If the fish have been frightened by him or with his shadow. If the weather be too cold. If the weather be too hot. If it rains much or fast. If it hails or snows. If it be tempestuous. If the wind blows high or be in the east or north. Want of patience and the want of a proper assortment of baits." Anglers are also warned "never to fish in any water that is not common without leave of the owner, which is seldom denied to any but those that do not deserve it." Another direction is given that would greatly horrify any Blue Ribbon army man who might see it, namely, "if at any time, you happen to be overheated with walking or other exercise, you must avoid small liquors as you would poison, and rather take a glass of brandy, the instantaneous effects of which in cooling the body and quenching drought are amazing."

The laws as to angling and fishing generally are quoted at considerable length and seem most of



them to be aimed at preventing immature fish being taken and preserves damaged. The penalties did not err on the side of clemency. By 5th Elizabeth, destroying any dam of any pond, moat or stew, &c., with intent to take the fish, was punished with three months' imprisonment and to be bound to good behaviour for seven years after ; also by 21st Elizabeth, "no servant shall be questioned for killing a trespasser within his master's liberty who will not yield ; if not done out of former malice. Yet if the trespasser kills any such servant it is murder."

I fancy the following, if carried out now, would rather astonish many fish dealers in the city of London :—"Those that sell, offer, or expose to sale or exchange for any other goods, bret or turbot under sixteen inches long ; brill or pearl under fourteen ; codlin twelve ; whiting six ; bass and mullet twelve ; sole, plaice, and dab eight ; and flounder seven, from their eyes to the utmost extent of the tail ; are liable to forfeit twenty shillings, by distress, or to be sent to hard labour for not less than six or more than fourteen days, and to be *whipped*." I suppose most, if not all, of these enactments are now repealed, but if not, and they were enforced, a considerable sensation would be created by them.

One paragraph is very remarkable, as showing



that over ninety years ago, the same views were promulgated, relating to the profit that might be obtained from fish in ponds, as have been brought forward in the *Times* and other papers during recent years. Our author says : “ It is surprising that, considering the benefit which may accrue from making ponds and keeping of fish, it is not more generally put in practice. For, besides furnishing the table and raising money, the land would be vastly improved and be worth forty shillings an acre ; four acres converted into a pond will return every year a thousand fed carp from the least size to fourteen or fifteen inches long, besides pike, perch, tench, and other fish. The carp alone may be reckoned to bring one with another, sixpence, ninepence, or perhaps twelpence apiece, amounting at the lowest rate to twenty-five pounds, and at the highest to fifty, which would be a very considerable as well as useful improvement.” Exactly ; this has been written and pointed out in the papers year after year.

There are wood-cuts of every fish and full directions how to angle for them. For pike, trolling, live baiting, fishing with frogs, are all lengthily described ; and also a curious sort of spinning, the motion being caused by cutting off one of the fins close to the gills and another behind the vent on the contrary



side. I am sorry to say the author winds up by full directions for snaring and snatching.

It seems curious to be told that good places for roach fishing are by Blackfriars, Westminster and Chelsea Bridges, or by the piles at London Bridge; but that the best way by far was to go below the bridges and fasten your boat to the "stern of any collier or other vessel whose bottom was dirty with weeds," to angle there, as "you would not fail to catch many roach, and those very fine ones." The sailors on board colliers must have been a very different set in those days from what they are now. I fancy anyone trying to tie his boat to the stern of a collier, whether for fishing or any other purpose, would have a pretty hot time of it. The Thames, of course, is mentioned as one of the rivers where salmon were caught, though the localities are not named. Exact particulars are given for fishing for eels, but in those days they must have been a very amiable sort of fish, not at all like the obstinate and perverse creatures they are now, if they allowed themselves to be caught by sniggling in the way mentioned. You were to "get a strong line of silk and a small hook bated with a lob worm; next get a short stick with a cleft in it, and put the line into it near the bait; then thrust it into such holes as you suppose him to lurk in. If he is there, it is



great odds that he will take it." The stick was then to be detached from the line and the eel allowed to gorge the bait. You were not to try and draw him out hastily, but to give him time to tire himself out by pulling. All I can say is, that if anyone ever managed to get an eel out in this way he must have had an uncommon share of luck. My own experience shows me that when an eel gorges your bait and gets into his hole, it is quite hopeless to attempt to get him out, and the only plan is to pull until something gives way, and that is never the eel, but usually your hook, and sometimes the line.

Our author having given every kind of advice and direction about angling, adds the following admonition :—"Remember that the wit and invention of mankind were bestowed for other purposes than to deceive silly fish, and that, however delightful angling may be, it ceases to be innocent when used otherwise than as a mere recreation"; and he winds up all he has to say about fresh-water angling thus :—"The editor having gone through the English alphabet, takes the liberty to tell gentlemen that the best way to secure fish is to transport poachers." A very wise piece of advice, no doubt much acted on in those days.

In the second part of the book, devoted to sea



fish, no directions are given for fishing, but merely descriptions of them, and very curious some of these are. We are told of dolphins, that "they sleep with their snouts out of water," and that "some have affirmed that they have heard them snore; they will live three days out of water, during which time they sigh in so mournful a manner as to affect those with concern, who are not used to hear them."

Another fish, the "sea-wolf, taken off Heligoland, is a very voracious animal, and well furnished with dreadful teeth. They are so hard that if he bites the fluke of an anchor you may hear the sound and see the impression of his teeth." Certainly the engraving of it makes it an awful-looking thing, with a body like a codfish and an enormous head, with a huge mouth full of teeth like spikes. When the herring fishery is mentioned, it is curious that the author gives a full account of the Dutch fishery but passes over the English with a very brief notice. The account of the former is remarkable. Their vessels were a kind of barque called a buss, from forty-five to sixty tons burden, carrying two or three small cannon; none were allowed to steer out of port without a convoy unless they carried twenty pieces of cannon amongst them all. What can have been the use of this regulation I cannot imagine. A



pirate would never attack a fishing-boat, and against a vessel of war they would have been useless. The regulations for fishing were very distinct. No man was to cast his net within 100 fathoms of another's boat; whilst the nets were cast, a light was to be left in the stern; if a boat was by any accident obliged to leave off fishing, the light was to be thrown into the sea, and when the greater part of the fleet left off fishing and cast anchor, the rest were to do the same.

Of the English fishery, the date of its commencement, the size of the nets and the names of the different sorts of herrings are merely given; these names are very curious, I wonder whether they are known on the coast now. Six sorts are given,—the Fat Herring, the largest and best; the Meat Herring, large, but not so thick as the first; the Night Herring, a middle-sized one; the Pluck, which has been hurt in the net; the Shotten Herring, which has lost its spawn; and the Copshen, which by some accident or other has been deprived of its head. When the whale fishery is mentioned, here too the description given relates entirely to the Dutch. As to the English it only says that in 1728 the South Sea Company began to work it with pretty good success at first, but that it dwindled away until 1740, when Parliament thought fit to give greater encouragement



to it. The discipline in the Dutch whale fleet seems to have been very good; the following are some of the standing regulations :—In case a vessel was wrecked and the crew saved, the first vessel they met with was to take them in and the second half of those from the first, but were not obliged to take in any of the cargo; but if any goods taken out of such vessel are absolutely relinquished and another ship finds and takes them, the captain was to be accountable to the owner of the wrecked ship for one-half clear of all expenses. If the crew deserted any wrecked vessel, they would have no claim to any of the effects saved, but the whole would go to the proprietor. However, if present when the effects were saved and they assisted therein, they would have one-fourth. That if a person piked a fish on the ice, it was his own so long as he left anyone with it, but the minute he left it, the fish became the property of the first captain that came along. If it was fastened to the shore by an anchor or rope, though left alone it belonged to its first captor. If any man was maimed or wounded in the Service, the Commissioners of the Fishery were to procure him reasonable satisfaction, to which the whole fleet were to contribute. They likewise agreed to attend prayers morning and evening, on pain of a forfeit at the discretion of the captain;



not to get drunk or draw their knives on forfeiture of half their wages, nor fight on forfeiture of the whole. They were not to lay wagers on the good or ill-success of the fishing, nor buy or sell with the condition of taking one or more fish on the penalty of twenty-five florins. They were likewise to rest satisfied with the provisions allowed them and never to light candle, fire, or match, without the captain's leave on the like penalty. These regulations were read out before the voyage commenced and the crew were then called over to receive the customary gratuity before setting out and were promised another on return in proportion to the success of the voyage. The vessels went north leaving Iceland on the left, to parallel  $75^{\circ}$ , but some, the author says, ventured as far as  $80^{\circ}$  or  $82^{\circ}$ . I fancy he had rather vague ideas on the subject of North latitude, as it was not until 1827 that Sir E. Parry reached  $82^{\circ}$ , the farthest point north ever attained up to that time.

Amongst other fish "stock fish" is mentioned, which is described as "cod fish caught in the North of Norway by fishermen who cut holes in the ice for the purpose. On hooking one, as soon as they pulled it out, it was opened, cleaned, and then thrown on the rocks where it froze and became as hard as a deal board, and never to be dissolved.



This the sailors beat to pieces, often calling it fresh fish, though it may have been kept seven years and worms have eaten holes in it." But if the letterpress is curious, the engravings with which the book is illustrated are still quainter. The fish, whether minnows or salmon, reach the same length; the only difference being made in their breadth, even the whale is merely represented as rather thicker and with two little men with axes in their hands walking on it. The author undoubtedly took great pains in compiling his work, and in spite of all eccentricities there are many hints and suggestions that are useful even nowadays.



## PARTRIDGE DAY AS IT WAS AND AS IT IS

BY AN ELDERLY SPORTSMAN

THE world advances — good. Having accepted which tenet, it would be unreasonable to deny that the pleasures and indulgences of the world advance also. Luxury is one of the pleasures and indulgences of the world. Therefore luxury advances. The syllogism is complete and sound; there is fault in neither major nor minor premiss; and we have therefore arrived at the ultimate conclusion that luxury is on the move—that is, has increased. I have seldom come across a more perfect illustration of my argument than in the early days of this month of September. I am not an old fogey; I do not set up pretensions to a claim for talking, with a kind of accompanying sigh, of the days “when I was a boy,” when “we managed things so much better,” &c., &c. Yet perhaps I am not exactly middle-aged either, and can at all events look sufficiently far back to note a material change in the manner in which old September is ushered in



now as compared with its reception some years ago. There are probably few, who, if lacking experience of its pleasures, can duly appreciate the ardour with which a sportsman looks forward to the "glorious first." But let the appreciative observer note how manifestly that ardour has of late years abated. It has been my frequent custom ere autumn has made her final curtsey, to take up my quarters at the country house of a certain relative, and witness the unprovoked assault on, and reckless massacre of divers unoffending partridges in the ensuing month. The relative referred to is an elderly gentleman, and, in addition to the possession of lands of his own, and liberties to shoot over those of other people, is also the happy father of three stalwart sons, not to mention the complementary portion of the family with whom at present I have nothing to do. These three stalwart sons, beknown to me as mere brats, I have watched grow up with some interest, and that not only as regards their moral and intellectual training, but also as regards the physical culture of their frames, and the sporting bent of their mind. The youngsters were always fond of me. I have always been their *fidus Achates*, in their adventures by land and water, from teaching them to swim and row, down to setting night lines for eels, or traps for rats. Well



do I recollect arriving, on the evening of the 31st of August, some years ago, at the old place in Lincolnshire, and finding all three in a state of wild exuberance of spirits in anticipation of the morrow's sport; Jack, the eldest, just then promoted to a gun of his own, of which he was enormously proud, and the other two contenting themselves with the exciting prospect of plodding after us the whole day in the hopes of being allowed to let off our charges at its conclusion. Everybody was eager enough then, and the Squire after an evening spent—much to the disgust of the ladies—in discussing the all-engrossing topic of “the birds,” sends us off early to bed, that we may all be up betimes in the morning.

We wake at seven, or rather are awoke, for the boys have been up since five, “chumming” (I know no word so appropriate) with the keepers; and even the Squire himself overhead I have heard stamping across his room to look out at the weather several times since four o'clock. We are awoke, then, at seven, and ere we have had time to take that fatal turn, the sure forerunner of a second sleep, a knock, or rather a thunderclap, is heard on the outer panels of the door, and Uncle Sam (they always call me Uncle Sam, though I am not their uncle, and my name is not Samuel) is summoned to



“look sharp, and dress.” Too cognizant of the fact that Uncle Sam’s only chance of peace is to obey, we splash into our tub forthwith, encase our person in an old velveteen and gaiters, and having gulped our coffee and hastily devoured our toast, find ourselves at nine o’clock standing on the hall steps, and comparing guns with Jack, previous to a start for the arable. Two keepers, a brace of perfect pointers, and a retriever, are awaiting, even at that hour, impatiently, our departure for the scene of action.

Two miles’ walk in the soft September air serves to brace our nerves for the work before us ; and the head keeper and the Squire having conferred together like two generals, on our arrival at the seat of war, we at length find ourselves placed—I should perhaps rather say marshalled—in the turnips and ready for the fray. What a picture it is ! how truly English ! each sportsman’s eye glistening with excitement and pleasure, as he poises his gun, each in his own readiest manner and favourite position, the Squire casting his eye along the line with the careful scrutiny of a field-marshal examining his forces previous to a final and decisive struggle ; the two pointers, too well disciplined to show their ardour in gestures, standing mute behind the keeper ; Jack with his gun full-cocked and ready to fire almost before the quarry is started ;



and his two brothers bursting with excitement, talking in hurried and ceaseless whispers behind the back of Uncle Sam, bearing no distant resemblance, as far as their half-checked ardour is concerned, to the brace of pointers behind the keeper. But there is no time for indulging in reverie as to the scene; a low "Hold up, then!" is heard from the head-keeper, the two graceful dogs bound forward, the line advances, and the action has commenced. A rabbit starts from under Jack's feet: Bang!—and the shot enters a turnip, a yard behind the little white stern hopping and popping to his burrow, despite the reiterated assurances of Master Jack that he is hit, and who forgets to reload accordingly. "Hold up!" to the crouching pointers, and away we move again, watching the graceful movements of the dogs as they work the field before us. Rake, a young dog in his first season, is breaking a little too much ahead; but ere the keeper's "Gently, boy!" had reached him, he has suddenly pulled up, and, with tail stiff and leg up, is standing, motionless as a statue, over a covey. We advance, in the highest excitement:—whirr! goes bird after bird almost singly; and our first covey of the season leaves two brace and a half on the field. One o'clock comes; we have steadily beaten turnips and stubble, clover and mustard, and we spy a man with



a donkey and panniers on the brow of the hill in front of us. We beat up to him, bagging a hare and a single bird on our way, and during the half-hour that is allowed us for our bread and cheese and one glass of sherry, we enjoy to our heart's content the large delights of loosing our tongues, after several hours' rigid silence. But "time is up," and we are again on the move till six; we are tired, but we don't know it; we are hungry and thirsty, but we feel not their pangs, till, with our five-and-twenty brace behind us in the bags, we strike across the park on our homeward journey. Uncle Sam's gun is yielded up to Master Tom to let off the charge with the shot drawn; but he manages surreptitiously to obtain our shot-flask, and joins us on the hall steps with a dead rabbit, somewhat mauled, however, from the young rascal's having fired at it at ten paces. We sit down to dinner in high good-humour:—who is not, after a good day? We defend our sport before the ladies from the charge of cruelty, and retire to roost so tired that we take the precaution to lock our door, to prevent the too early and too sure incursion of the young Visigoths in the morning. Alas! for the days that are no more. Seven or eight years have passed since that pleasant day, and Downcharge Hall again welcomes Uncle Sam on the evening of the 31st,



under its hospitable roof ; I find the boys all grown into young men ; Jack is a captain of Hussars, Tom is a subaltern in the Engineers, and Dick has just left Christ Church. They are still as fond as ever of Uncle Sam, though they occasionally venture so far nowadays, as to offer an opinion adverse to his on sporting matters, in which his word was formerly supreme. As I descend to dinner, I pass Jack's room. Hailed by its tenant, of course. I enter, and find him occupied, with care above his years, in the adjustment of his spotless white necktie, two of which articles, crumpled too much in the operation, are at present adorning the floor. "Think of shooting to-morrow, Sam ?" (The title of "uncle" has been dropped since Jack first stroked his downy upper lip as a second lieutenant). I stand aghast. Here is a young man, full of health and vigour, on the evening of the 31st August, questioning a fellow-man, who has just travelled some hundred miles and more to Downcharge Hall, with his arm round his gun-case, as to his intention of shooting on the 1st of September. Entertaining a faint hope that, in the exuberance of his youthful spirits, he may be chaffing his old relative, I gasp out an affirmative, and, obeying the summons of the dinner-bell, descend the stairs. There is a large party of guests, but dinner proceeds with but one allusion to the morrow



and that is from Dick, who exclaims, as he fingers the delicate stem of his champagne glass, "By-the-by, to-morrow will be the 1st." The piece of fowl I was that moment in the act of swallowing stuck in my throat; my appetite was destroyed, and I silently, but sorrowfully, resolved that for the future no prodigy could have power to amaze me. Our guests stayed late, and at half-past eleven o'clock, mindful of my early rising the next day, I began to grow fidgetty. By twelve o'clock, however, they had all gone; and having despatched the ladies of the house to bed, my hand was already grasping my bed-candle, when Tom arrested my intention, bidding me, in a voice of manifest astonishment at what he was pleased to call my "early roost," to come and do a pipe or two first in Dick's room. Labouring under the delusion that a quarter of an hour was about to be devoted to arranging our sporting plans, I obeyed, and after two hours in Dick's room, spent almost entirely in discussing the relative merits and demerits of certain ladies and horses, found myself between the sheets at last. Awaking with a start, in the morning, to discover it is eight o'clock, I dress with all possible speed, haunted the while with terrible pictures of impatient sportsmen below anathematizing my tardiness as they wait breakfast for me. I hurry



down stairs,—the breakfast room is tenantless. My first impression is that they have been unable to curb their sporting ardour, and have started without me. Hearing a footstep on the gravel sweep without, I step through the open casement, and confront a pretty dairymaid bringing in the milk and cream for breakfast.

“Fine mornin’, sir.”

“Yes. Which way have they gone—can you tell me?”

“Same gait as ever, sir. Joe have druv ’em down agin the fenny pasture, arter milkin’ up hinder.”

“Ah! but the gentlemen, not the cows.”

“The gentlemen, is it? Maybe if ye look in their beds ye’ll see ’em this time o’ day.”

Heaving a mighty sigh, I leave the dairymaid, and stroll up and down the garden, listening with increasing impatience to the distant call of the partridges in the park. Nature at Downcharge Hall that morning was at all events beautifully still; there was a slight mist, too, gradually clearing off from the distance, which betokened very surely a broiling day, and made me long the more to get our seven or eight brace before the mid-day heat should come upon us. My longings and reflections, however, were suddenly cut short by a pitying butler,



who had brought me out the *Times*, with the remark that "Master and the young gentlemen seldom has their breakfasts before ten." This was cheerful; however, I consoled myself with the paper, and just as I had finished discovering who was born, married, or dead, and had commenced reading the entreaties to return to afflicted initial letters, &c., &c., Dick's terrier entered the room, the forerunner of his master, who, remarking on my actually being an earlier bird than himself, was followed, in the course of about twenty minutes, by the others.

"I suppose we shoot to-day: where shall we begin?" asks Tom.

"Oh! we will shoot up from Brinkhill," answers the Squire.

"Brinkhill—two miles;—must have a trap," says Jack.

The two-mile walk used to be part of the order of the day; it gave us a little time for conversation, prohibited from its conclusion till lunch; it braced one up, and made one, in sporting phraseology, "fit"; but nowadays a carriage is necessary, and the young Nimrod is unequal to any fatigue beyond that which he must necessarily undergo in pursuit of his game. However, we are late, so I can't object to it; and, burning my throat in my hasty



early. It is the same old field in which I so well remember Jack making his *débüt* and missing the rabbit; but I miss the eager faces of those days sadly; it doesn't seem the same thing to me; half the pleasure of a thing, after all, is in enjoying it in company; but that half is sadly marred if the said company are cool in their enjoyment. The dogs, too, are disgustingly wild now. Old Rake breaks fence and flushes our first covey long out of gunshot, my disgust at which is further augmented by one of the keepers, as wild as the dog, breaking line and starting a hare, as remote as the partridges, by his loud imprecations after the miscreant, who is utterly deaf alike to whistle, threats, and entreaties. There is fault enough here; but it doesn't lie entirely with the keeper; it is too evident there is an absence of the eye of the master. If the Squire grows indifferent to their proceedings, he can scarcely expect his dogs and keepers to be what they were; the keeper gets lazy or dishonest, the dogs' training is neglected, and by-and-by they become useless or worse than useless, and their services are discarded. Now if there is one thing more than another which enhances the pleasure of a day's partridge-shooting, it is to watch a brace of well-trained pointers work a field. Why is it then—for obviously it is so—that the use of dogs, and especially of setters



and pointers in the field, is gradually being discarded?

But to proceed. As soon as order is tolerably restored, we advance again, and pretty steadily beat two or three fields, bagging, with an unheard-of amount of missing, about two brace of birds. We are just entering the next field, when the Brinkhill tenant rides up and asks us all in to lunch. Ye gods, what a feast! Some years ago some bread and cheese, and perhaps a couple of glasses of sherry under a hedge was considered ample on these occasions. Now, however, I have before me an elegant repast of ham and tongue, of fowls and lamb, of pies and fruit, of beer and sherry, port and claret, such as would have shamed the epicurean deities of heathen mythology quaffing ambrosial nectar on the heights of Olympus. With a hopeless shudder I deposit my gun in a corner of the room and take my seat. We breakfasted at ten, but the "unwonted" exercise (alas! it should be so) has given the youngsters an appetite, and their tongues are tied for ten minutes, before worthy Mr Shorthorn, the tenant, produces a bottle of "that very fine old port" he so wishes the Squire to taste. I am not exaggerating when I state that lunch lasted a good hour. Then his pigs are inspected, and what with the wine and the waiting, I



would marry her (I am far too vain to doubt her consent), and get some shooting of my own,—some shooting, sir, conducted on my own principles: I don't care much for the Downcharge Hall style of doing business. “C'est magnifique, mais ce n'est pas la guerre,” remarked a French general, as he levelled his glass at our light squadrons charging through the bloody vale of Balaklava. “C'est luxurieux, mais ce n'est pas le sport,” remarks the writer of this grumble, as he levels his pen at the sportsmen of Downcharge Hall and all who may resemble them.



## SIMPSON'S SNIPE

"Who is Mr Simpson?" asked my wife, tossing a letter across the breakfast-table. This same little lady opens my correspondence with the *sang-froid* of a private secretary.

"Who is Mr Simpson?" she repeated. "If he is as big as his monogram, we shall have to widen all the doors, and raise the ceilings, in order to let him in."

The monogram referred to resembled a pyrotechnic device. It blazed in all the colours of the rainbow, and twisted itself like the coloured worsted in a young lady's first sampler.

"Simpson," I replied, in, I must confess, a tremulous sort of way, "is a very nice fellow, and a capital shot."

"I perceive that you have asked him to shoot."

"Only for a day and a night, my dear."

"Only for a day and a night! And where is Willie to sleep, and where is Blossie to sleep? You know the dear children are in the strangers' rooms for change of air, and really I *must* say it is



very thoughtless of you ;” and my wife’s *nez retroussé* went up at a very acute angle, whilst a general hardness of expression settled itself upon her countenance, like a plaster cast.

I had a bad case. I had been dining with a friend, my friend Captain de Britska. I had taken sherry with my soup, hock with my fish, champagne with my entrée, and a nip of brandy before my claret. What I imbibed after the Lafitte I scarcely remember. Mr Simpson was of the party, and sat next to me. He forced a succession of cigars into my mouth, and subsequently a mixture of tobacco, a special thing. (What smoker, by the way, hasn’t a special thing in the shape of a mixture? what *gourmet* has no special tip as regards salad-dressing?) We spoke of shooting. He asked me if I had any. I replied in the affirmative, expressing a hope that he would at some time or other practically discuss that fact. Somehow I was led into a direct invitation, and this was the outcome. I had committed myself beneath my friend’s mahogany, and under the influence of my friend’s generous wine. I was in a corner; and now, ye gods! I had to face Mrs Smithe. There are moments when a man’s wife is simply awful. Snugly entrenched behind the unassailable line of defence, duty, and with such “Woolwich Infants” as her children to hurl



against you, which she does in a persistent remorseless way, she is a terror. No man, be he as brave as Leonidas or as cool as Sir Charles Coldstream, is proof against the partner of his bosom when she is on the rampage; and, as I have already observed, Mrs S. was "end on."

"Another change will do the children good, Maria," I observed.

"Yes, I suppose so. It will do Willie's cold good to sleep in your dressing-room without a fire, won't it? and Blossie can have a bed made up in the bath. Is this Mr Simpson married or single?"

*Hinc illæ lachrymæ.* I couldn't say. I never asked him.

"What does it matter?" I commenced, with a view to diplomatising.

"Yes, but it does," she interposed. "If he is a respectable married man, which I very much doubt, he must have dear Willie's room."

"I am very sorry that I asked him at all, Maria; but as he has been asked, and as I must drive over to meet him in a few minutes, for Heaven's sake make the best of it."

"Oh, of course; I receive my instructions, and am to carry them out. All the trouble falls upon me, while you drive off to the station smoking a



shilling cigar, when you know that every penny will be wanted to send Willie to Eton."

I got out of it somehow. Not that Mrs S. was entirely pacified. She still preserved an armed neutrality; yet even this concession was very much to be coveted. She's a dear good little creature, but she has fiery moods occasionally; and I ask you, my dear sir, is she one whit the worse for it? How often does your good lady fly at *you* during the twenty-four hours? How often! The theme is painful. *Passons.*

My stained-wood trap was brought round by my man-of-all-work, Billy Doyle. Billy is a tight little "boy," over whose unusually large skull some fifty summers' suns have passed, scorching away his shock hair, and leaving only a few streaks, which he carefully plasters across his bald pate till they resemble so many cracks upon the bottom of an inverted china bowl. Billy is my factotum. He looks after my horse, dogs, gun, rod, pipes, and clothes, with a view to the reversion of the latter. He was reared, "man an' boy," on the estate, and is upon the most familiar yet respectful terms with the whole family. Billy continually lectures me, imparting his opinions upon all matters appertaining to my affairs, as though he were some rich uncle whose will in my favour was safely deposited with the family solicitor.



"We've twenty minutes to meet the train, Billy," I observed, giving the reins a jerk.

"Is it for to ketch the tin-o'clock thrain from Dublin?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Begorra, ye've an hour! She's like yourself—she's always late."

"There's a gentleman coming down to spend the day and shoot," I said, without noticing Billy's sarcasm.

"Shoot! Arrah, shoot what?"

"Why, snipe, plover—anything that may turn up."

"Be jabbers, he'll have for to poach, thin."

"What do you mean, Billy?"

"Divvle resave the feather there is betune this an' Ballybann; they're dhruv out av the cunthry."

"Nonsense, man. We'll get a snipe in Booker's fields."

"Ye will, av ye sind to Dublin for it."

I felt rather down in the mouth, for I had during the season given unlimited permission to my surrounding neighbours to blaze away—a privilege which had been used, if not abused, to the utmost limits. Scarce a day passed that we were not under fire, and on several occasions were in a state



of siege, in consequence of a succession of raids upon the rookeries adjoining the house.

"We can try Mr Pringle's woods, Billy."

"Yez had betther lave *thim* alone, or the coroner 'ill be afther havin' a job. Pringle wud shoot his father sooner nor he'd let a bird be touched."

"This is very awkward," I muttered.

"Awkward ! sorra a shurer shake in Chrisendom. It's crukkered nor what happened to ould Major Moriarty beyant at Sievenaculliagh, that me father—may the heavens be his bed this day !—lived wud, man an' boy."

Billy was full of anecdote, and being anxious to pull my thoughts together, I mechanically requested him to let me hear all about the dilemma in which the gallant Major had found himself.

"Well, sir, th' ould Major was as dacent an ould gintleman as ever swallied a glass o' sperrits, an' there was always lashins an' lavins beyant at the house. If ye wor hungry it was yerself that was for to blame, and if ye wor dhry, it wasn't be raisin av wantin' a *golliogue*. Th' ould leddy herself was aigual to the Major, an' a hospitabler ould cupple didn't live the Shannon side o' Connaught. Well, sir, wan mornin' a letther cums, sayin' that some frind was comin' for to billet on thim.

" 'Och, I'm bet ! ' says the Mrs Moriarty.



“ ‘What’s that yer sayin’ at all at all?’ says th’ ould Major; ‘who bet ye?’ says he.

“ ‘Shure, here’s Sir Timothy Blake, and Misther Bodkin Bushe, an’ three more comin’,’ says she, ‘an’ this is only Wednesday.’

“ ‘Arrah, what the dickens has that for to say to it?’ says the Major.

“ ‘There’s not as much fresh mate in the house as wud give a brequest to a blackbird,’ says she; ‘an’ they all ate fish av a Friday, an’ how are we for to get it at all at all? An’ they’ll be wantin’ fish an’ game.’

“ ‘Ye see, sir,’ said Billy, ‘there was little or no roads in thim ould times, an’ the carriers only crassed that way wanst a week.’

“ ‘We’re hobbled, sure enough,’ says the Major, ‘we’re hobbled, mam,’ says he, ‘an’ I wish they’d had manners to wait to be axed afore they’d come into a man’s house,’ he says.

“ ‘Couldn’t ye shoot somethin’?’ says Mrs Moriarty.

“ ‘Shoot a haystack flyin’, mam,’ says the Major, for he was riz, an’ when he was riz the divvle cudn’t hould him; ‘what is there for to shoot, barrin’ a saygull? an’ ye might as well be aitin’ saw-dust.’

“ ‘I seen three wild duck below on the pond,’ she says.



“ ‘ Ye did on Tib’s Eve ! ’ says the Major.

“ ‘ Och, begorra, it’s thruth I’m tellin’ ye,’ says she ; ‘ I seen thim this very mornin’, when I was comin’ from mass—an’ be the same token,’ says she, lukkin’ out av the windy, ‘ there they are, rosy an’ well.’

“ ‘ Thin upon my conscience, mam,’ roared the Major, ‘ if I don’t hit thim I’ll make them lave that ! ’

“ So he ups an’ loads an ould blundherbuss wud all soarts av combusticles, an’ down he creeps to the edge av the wather, and hides hissself in some long grass, for the ducks was heddin’ for him. Up they cum ; an’ the minnit they wor within a cupple av perch he pulls the thrigger as bould as a ram, whin by the hokey smut it hot him a welt in the stum-mick that levelled him, an’ med him feel as if tundher was inside av him rumblin’. He roared millia murdher, for he thought he was kilt ; but howsomever he fell soft an’ aisy, an’ he put out his hand for to see if he was knocked to bits behind, whin, begorra, he felt somethin’ soft an’ warm. ‘ Arrah, what the puck is this ? ’ sez he ; an’ turnin’ round, what was he sittin’ on but an illigant Jack hare. ‘ Yer cotch, *ma bouchal*,’ sez he ; ‘ an’ yer as welkim as the flowers o’ May.’

“ Wasn’t that a twist o’ luck, sir ? ” asked Billy pausing to take breath.



“Not a doubt of it. But what became of the ducks?”

“Troth, thin, ye’ll hear. The Major dhropped two av thim wud the combusticles in the blundherbuss, but th’ ould mallard kep’ floatin’ on the wather in a quare soart av a way, an’ yellin’ murdher. When the Major kem nigh him, he seen that he was fastened like to somethin’ undher the wather; an’ whin he cotch him, what do you think he found? It’s truth I’m tellin’ ye, an’ no lie : he found the ramrod, that he neglected for to take out o’ the gun, run right through th’ ould mallard. Half av it was in the mallard, an’ be the hole in me coat, th’ other half was stuck in a lovely lump av a salmon; and the bould Major cotch thim both. ‘Now,’ says he, ‘come on, Sir Tim an the whole creel of yez, who’s afeard?’ An’ I’m just thinkin’ sir,” added Billy, as we dashed into the railway yard, “that if ye don’t get a slice av luck like Major Moriarty’s, yer frind might as well be on the Hill o’ Howth.”

The force of Billy’s remark riveted itself in my mind, and the idea of asking a man so long a distance to shoot nothing was very little short of insult. Mr Simpson arrived as we drove in, arrayed in an ulster just imported from Inverness. His hat was new; his boots were new; his gloves awfully new, yellow and stiff, and forcing his fingers very far



apart, as though his hands were wooden stretchers. His portmanteau, solid leather, was brand new ; the very purse from which he extracted a new sixpence to tip the porter was of the same virgin type. He was mistaken for a bridegroom, and the fair bride was eagerly sought for by the expectant porter whilst removing a new rug from the compartment in which Mr Simpson had been seated. To crown all this newness, his gun-case, solid leather, had never seen the open air till this day, and the iron which impressed upon it Mr Rigby's brand could scarcely have had time to grow cold.

"Begorra, it's in the waxworks he ought for to be," muttered Billy Doyle, grimly surveying him from head to foot.

Mr Simpson's thick moustache possessed a queer sort of curl, his nose too, followed this pattern, so that his face somewhat resembled those three legs which are impressed upon a Manx coin. His eyes were long slits, with narrow lids, not unlike a cut in a kid glove: one of these eyes he kept open by means of an eyeglass. This eyeglass was perpetually dropping into his bosom and disappearing, never coming to the surface when required, and only coming up to breathe after a succession of prolonged and abortive dives.

"It's very cold," he exclaimed, grasping my



hand, or rather endeavouring to grasp it, for the new gloves would admit of no loving contact.

"There's likker over beyant at the rifrishmint-bar," observed Billy, whose invariable habit it was to cut into the conversation with such comments or observations as suggested themselves to him at the moment.

Perceiving an inclination on the part of my guest to profit by the hint, I interposed by informing him that the refreshment was of the meanest possible character, in addition to its possessing a very inflammatory tendency.

"Thru for ye, sir. The sperrits is that sthrong that it wud desthroy warts, or burn the paint off av a hall dure."

"That will do, Billy," I said, as Simpson's face bore silent tokens of wonder at the garrulity of my retainer. "We don't require your opinion at present."

"Och, that's hapes, as Missis Dooley remarked whin she swallowd the crab," said Billy very sulkily, as he mounted behind.

"How is our friend De Britska?" I asked.

"Oh, very well indeed. He quite envied me my trip. He says your shooting is about the best thing in this part of the world."

"Oh, it's not bad," I replied, assuming an in-



difference that I was far from participating in ;  
“but there are times when I assure—ha, ha ! it  
may appear incredulous, that we cannot stir a single  
feather.”

“Have you much snipe, Mr Smithe ?”

“Sorra a wan,” replied Billy.

“Your gamekeeper ?” asked Simpson, jerking his  
head in the direction of my retainer.

“My *factotum*. He is one of the family. A  
regular character, and I trust you will make allow-  
ances for him.”

“I love characters. Depend upon it we shall  
not fall out.”

Simpson chatted very agreeably, and very small.  
He had read the *Irish Times* during the rail jour-  
ney, and was master of the situation. Some men  
take five shillings-worth out of a penny paper. This  
was one of them. He had sucked it all in, and the  
day's news was coming out through the pores of his  
skin. As a rule, such men are to be avoided.  
The individual who persistently asks you “What  
news ?” or “Is there anything new to-day ?” is a  
wooden-headed gossiping bore, who cannot start an  
idea, and oils the machinery inside his skull with  
the twopenny-halfpenny daily currency. Simpson  
spoke a great deal of the army, quoted the various  
changes mentioned in that day's *Gazette* with a vigour



of memory that was perfectly astounding. Although personally unknown to the countrymen around me, he seemed thoroughly acquainted with their respective pedigrees, their intermarriages, their rent-rolls, and in fact with their most private concerns; so that before we reached our destination I knew considerably more of my neighbours than I, or my father before me, had ever known.

His shooting experiences were of the most extensive and daring character. He had tumbled tigers, stuck pigs, iced white bears, and ostracised ostriches. He had been in the tiger's mouth, on the boar's tusks, and in the arms of the bear. His detailed information on the subject of firearms was worthy of a gunmaker's pet 'prentice.

"I've shot with Greener's patent central-fire choke-bore, and I pronounce it a handy tool. Westley Richards has made some good instruments, and Purdy's performances are crack. I've taken down one of Rigby's with me, as I have some idea of experimentalising; Rigby is a very safe maker. I expect to do some damage to-day, friend Smithe."

What a laughing-stock I should be, when this man unfolded the tale of his being decoyed into the country by a fellow who bragged about his preserves, upon which there wasn't a feather! Would I make a clean breast of it? would I say that—



While this struggle was waging beneath my waistcoat, we arrived, and there was nothing for it but to trust to luck and Billy Doyle.

When we alighted, I asked Simpson into the drawing-room, as his bed-chamber had not yet been allotted to him. My wife was still sulky and did not appear, so I had to discover her whereabouts.

"Simpson has arrived, my dear."

"I suppose so," very curtly.

"He is a very agreeable entertaining fellow."

"I suppose so," she snapped.

"Where have you decided on putting him?"

"In your dressing-room."

"My dressing-room?"

"Yes, your dressing-room. I wouldn't disturb the children for the Prince of Wales."

Now this was very shabby of my wife. My dressing-room was my *sanctum sanctorum*. There were my papers, letters, pipes, boots, knick-knacks, all laid out with a bachelor's care, and each in its own particular place. To erect a bedstead meant an utter disturbance of my effects, which weeks could not repair, especially as regards my papers. I expostulated.

"There is no use in talking," said my wife; "the bed is put up."

Tableau.



Whilst my guest was engaged in washing his hands before luncheon, I held a conference with Billy Doyle with reference to the shooting, our line of country, and the tactics necessary to be pursued.

"Me opinion is that he is a *gommoch*. He doesn't know much. Av he cum down wud an old gun-case that was in the wars, I'd be peckened; but wud sich a ginteel tool, ye needn't fret. We'll give him a walk, anyhow. He'll get a bellyful that will heart scald him."

"But the honour of the country is at stake, Billy. I asked Mr Simpson to shoot, promising him good sport, and surely *you* are not going to let him return to Dublin to give us a bad name."

This appeal to Billy's feelings was well timed. He knew every fence and every nest in the barony, and it was with a view to putting things into a proper training that I thus appealed to his better feelings.

Billy scratched his head.

"Begorra, he must have a bird if they're in it; but they're desperate wild, and take no ind of decoyin'."

Simpson's politeness to my wife was unbounded. He professed himself charmed to have the honour of making her acquaintance, took her in to luncheon with as much tender care as though she had been a cracked bit of very precious china ware; invited her to partake of everything on the table, shoving

the dishes under her chin, and advising her as to what to eat, drink, and avoid. He narrated stories of noble families with whom he was upon the most intimate terms, and assured my wife that he was quite startled by her extraordinary likeness to Lady Sarah Macwhirter; which so pleased Mrs S. that later on she informed me that as Blossie was so much better, she thought it would be more polite to give Mr Simpson the blue bedroom.

I found this ardent sportsman very much inclined to dally in my lady's boudoir, in preference to taking the field, and I encouraged this proclivity, in the hope of escaping the shooting altogether, and thus save the credit of my so-called preserves. But here again I was doomed to disappointment. Mrs S., who now began to become rather anxious about the domestic arrangements, politely but firmly reminded him of the object of his visit, and insisted upon our departing for the happy hunting-grounds at once. And at length, when very reluctantly he rose from the table, he helped himself to a stiff glass of brandy-and-water, in order, as he stated, to "steady his hand."

I must confess that I was rather startled when he announced his intention of shooting in his ulster. The idea of dragging this long-tailed appendage across ditches and over bogs appeared *outré*, espe-



cially as the pockets bulged very considerably, as though they were loaded with woollen wraps; but I was silent in the presence of one who had sought his quarry in the jungle, and shoved my old-fashioned idea back into the fusty lumber-room of my thoughts. Billy Doyle awaited us with the dogs at the stable gate. These faithful animals no sooner perceived me than they set up an unlimited howling of delight; but instead of bounding forward to meet me, as was their wont, they suddenly stopped, as if struck by an invisible hand, and commenced to set at Simpson.

This extraordinary conduct of these dogs—there are no better dogs in Ireland—incensed Billy to fever heat.

“Arrah, what the puck are yez settin’ at? Are yez mad or dhrunk? Whoop! gelang ow a that, Feltram! Hush! away wud ye, Birdlime!”

“Take them away; take them away!” cried Simpson, very excitedly. “I don’t want them; I never shoot with dogs. Remove them, my man.”

Billy caught Feltram, but Birdlime eluded his grasp; and having released Feltram and captured Birdlime, the former remained at a dead set, whilst the latter struggled with his captor, as though the lives of both depended on the issue.

“May the divvle admire me,” panted Billy, “but

this bangs Banagher. Is there a herrin' stirrin', or anything for to set the dogs this way?—it bates me intirely."

I naturally turned to my guest, who looked as puzzled as I did myself.

"I have it!" he cried; "it's the blood of the sperm-whale that's causing this."

"Arrah, how the blazes cud the blood av all the whales in Ireland make thim shupayriour animals set as if the birds were foreninst them?" demanded Billy, his arms akimbo.

"I will explain," said Simpson. "Last autumn I was up whaling off the coast of Greenland. We struck a fine fish; and after playing him for three-and-twenty hours, we got him aboard. Just as we were taking the harpoon out, he made one despairing effort and spurted blood; a few drops fell upon this coat, just here," pointing to the inside portion of his right-hand cuff, "and I pledge you my veracity no dog can withstand it. They invariably point; and I assure you, Smithe, you could get up a drag hunt by simply walking across country in this identical coat, built by John Henry Smalpage."

This startling and sensational explanation satisfied me. Not so my *factotum*, who gave vent in an undertone to such exclamations as "*Naboclisk! Wirra,*



*wirra!* What does he take us for? Whales, begorra!"

The riddance of the dogs was a grand *coup* for me. In the event of having no sport the failure could be easily accounted for, and I should come off with flying colours.

"I make it a point," observed Simpson, "to shoot as little with dogs as possible. I like to set my own game, shoot it, and bag it; nor do I care to be followed by troublesome and often impertinent self-opinionated game-keepers" (Billy was at this moment engaged in incarcerating Feltram and Birdlime). "These fellows are always spoilt, and never know their position."

I was nettled at this.

"If you refer to——"

"My dear Smithe, I allude to my friend Lord Mulligatawny's fellows, got up in Lincoln green and impossible gaiters, who insist upon loading for you, and all that sort of thing. You know Mulligatawny, of course?"

I rather apologised for not having the honour.

"Then you shall, Smithe. I'll bring you together when you come to town. Leave that to me; a nice little party: Mulligatawny, Sir Percy Whiffler, Colonel Owlfinch of the 1st Life Guards—they're at Beggar's Bush now, I suppose—Belgum, yourself, and myself."

This was very considerate and flattering; and I heartily hoped that by some fluke or other we might be enabled to make a bag.

When we arrived upon the shooting-ground, I observed that it was time to load; and calling up Billy Doyle with the guns, I proceeded to carry my precept into practice. My weapon was an old-fashioned muzzle-loader, one of Truelock & Harris's; and as I went through the process of loading, I could see that Mr Simpson was regarding my movements with a careful and critical eye.

"I know that you swells despise this sort of thing," I remarked; "but I have dropped a good many birds with this gun at pretty long ranges, and have wiped the eyes of many a breech-loading party."

"I—I like that sort of gun," said Simpson. "I'd be glad if you'd take this," presenting his, with both barrels covering me.

"Good heavens, don't do that!" I cried, shoving the muzzle aside.

"What—what—" he cried, whirling round like a teetotum—"what have I done?"

"Nothing as yet; but I hate to have the muzzle of a gun turned towards me since the day I saw poor cousin Jack's brains blown out."

"What am I to do?" exclaimed Simpson. "I'll do anything."



"It's all right," I replied; "you won't mind my old-world stupidity."

My guest's gun was a central-fire breech-loader of Rigby's newest type, which he commenced to prepare for action in what seemed to me to be a very bungling sort of way. He dropped it twice, and in releasing the barrels, brought them into very violent collision with his head, which caused the waters of anguish to roll silently down his cheeks and on to his pointed moustache. If I had not been aware of his manifold experiences in the shooting line, I could have set him down as a man who had never handled a gun in his life; but knowing his powers and prowess, I ascribed his awkwardness to simple carelessness, a carelessness in all probability due to the smallness of the game of which he was now in pursuit. I therefore refrained from taking any notice, and from making any observation until he deliberately proceeded to thrust a patent cartridge into the *muzzle* of the barrel of his central-fire.

"Hold hard, Mr Simpson; you are surely only jesting."

"Jesting! How do you mean?"

"Why, using that cartridge in the way you are doing."

"What other way should I use it?"

"May I again remind you that I am utterly averse to facetiousness where firearms are concerned, and—"

"My dear Smithe, I meant nothing, I assure you. I pledge you my word of honour. Here, load it yourself;" and he handed me the gun.

"There'll be a job for the coroner afore sunset," growled Billy.

"What do you mean, sir?" exclaimed Simpson, rather savagely.

"Mane! There's widdys and lone orphans enough in the counthry, sir—that's what I mane," and Billy started in advance with the air of a man who had to do or die.

Mr Simpson was silent for some time, during which he found himself perpetually involved in his gun, which appeared to give him the uttermost uneasiness. First, he held it at arm's length as if it was a bow; then he placed it under his arm, and held on to it with the tenacity of an octopus; after a little he shifted it again, sloping it on his shoulder, ever and anon glancing towards the barrels to ascertain their exact position. He would pause, place the butt against the ground, and survey the surrounding prospect with the scrutinising gaze of a cavalry patrol.

"Hush!" he suddenly exclaimed. "We lost something that time; I heard a bird."



"Nothin', barrin' a crow," observed Billy.

"A plover, sir; it was the cry of a plover," evasively retorted the other.

"Holy Vargin! do ye hear this? A pluvver! Divvle resave the pluvver ever was seen in the barony!"

"Silence, Doyle!" I shouted, finding that my retainer's observations were becoming personal and unpleasant.

"Troth, we'll all be silent enough by-an'-by."

We had been walking for about half an hour, when Mr Simpson suggested that it might be advisable to separate, he taking one direction, I taking the other, but both moving in parallel lines. Having joyfully assented to this proposition, as the careless manner in which he handled his gun was fraught with the direst consequences, I moved into an adjacent bog, leaving my guest to blaze away at what I considered a safe distance. I took Billy with me, both for company and for counsel, as my guest's assumed ignorance of the fundamental principles of shooting had somewhat puzzled me.

"It's a quare bisniss intirely, Masther Jim. He knows no more how to howld a gun nor you do to howld a baby, more betoken ye've two av the finest childre—God be good to them!—in Europe. I don't like for to say he's coddin' us, wud his tigers

an' elephants an' combusticles, but, be me song, it luks very like it. I'd like for to see him shootin', that wud putt an ind to the question."

At this moment, bang! bang! went the two barrels of my guest's gun. Billy and I ran to the hedge, and peeping through, perceived Simpson running very fast towards a clump of furze, shouting and gesticulating violently. I jumped across the fence, and was rapidly approaching him, when he waved me back.

"Stop! don't come near me! I'm into them. There are quantities of snipe here."

"Arrah, what is he talkin' about at all at all?" panted Billy. "Snipes! Cock him up wud snipes! There ain't a snipe——"

Here Simpson, who had been groping amongst the furze, held up to our astonished gaze *two brace of snipe*.

Billy Doyle seemed completely dumbfounded. "That bangs anything I ever heerd tell of. Man nor boy ever seen a snipe in that field afore. Begorra, he's handy enough wud the gun, after all."

I was very much pleased to find that our excursion had borne fruit, and that my vaunted preserves were not utterly barren.

"That's a good beginning, Simpson," I cried. "Go ahead; you'll get plenty of birds by-and-by."



"I'll shoot at nothing but snipe," he replied. "Here you, Billy, come here and load for me."

"Let's look at the birds, av ye plaze, sir," said Billy, who began to entertain a feeling akin to respect for a man who could bring down his two brace at a shot. "I'll be bound they're fat an' cosy, arter the hoighth av fine feedin' on this slob."

"They're in my bag. By-and-by," replied Simpson curtly. "Now, my man, follow your master, and leave me to myself;" and my guest strode in the opposite direction.

Bang! bang!

"Be the mortal, he's at thim agin. This is shu-payriour," cried my retainer, hurrying towards the place whence the report proceeded.

Simpson again held up *two brace of snipe*, and again plunged them into his bag; nor would he gratify the justifiable longings of our gamekeeper by as much as a peep at them.

"This is capital sport. Why, this place is swarming with snipe," cried my guest, whilst his gun was being reloaded. "Depend upon it, it's a mistake to take dogs. The birds smell them. I'll try that bit of bog now."

"Ye'll have to mind yer futtin'," observed Billy. "It's crukked an' crass enough in some spots; I'd betther be wid ye."

"Certainly not," said my guest. "I always shoot alone."

"Och, folly yer own wish, sir; only mind yer futtin'."

Mr Simpson disappeared into the hollow in which the bog was situated, and, as before, bang! bang! we heard the report of both barrels.

"Be jabbers, I'm bet intirely. Thim snipes must have been dhruv from the say, an' have come here unknownst to any wan. Ay, bawl away! Whisht! be the hokey, he's into the bog!"

A dismal wailing, accompanied by cries for help, arose from out the bog, where we found poor Simpson almost up to his chin, and endeavouring to support himself by his elbows.

"Ugh! ugh! lift me out, for heaven's sake! My new clothes—this coat that I never put on before" (his whaling garment)—"why did I come to this infernal hole. Ugh! ugh!"

We dragged him up, leaving his patent boots and stockings behind him. Billy bore him on his back to the house, where he was stripped and arrayed in evening costume.

From the pockets of his ulster, which it was found necessary to turn out for drying purposes, Mr William Doyle extracted no less than *six brace of snipe*. Unfortunately for Mr Simpson the bill



was attached to the leg of one of the birds. They had been purchased at a poulterer's in Dublin.

\* \* \* \* \*

Mr Simpson did not remain to dine or to sleep. He pleaded a business engagement which he had completely overlooked, and left by the 4.50 train.

“Av all th’ imposthors! and his tigers an’ elephants no less, an’ bears an’ algebras! An’ goin’ for to cod me into believin’ there was snipes growin’ in a clover-field, an’ thin never to gi’ me a shillin’! Pah! the naygur!” and Billy Doyle’s resentment recognised no limits.

It is scarcely necessary to observe that I was *not* invited to meet Lord Mulligatawny, Sir Percy Whittler, and Colonel Owlfinch of Her Majesty’s Guards, and that my wife holds Simpson over me whenever I hint at the probability of a visit to the metropolis.

## PODGERS' POINTER

I AM not a sporting man—I never possessed either a dog or a gun—I never fired a shot in my life, and the points of a canine quadruped are as unknown to me as those of the sea-serpent. The 12th of August is a mystery, and the 1st of September a sealed book. I have been regarded with well-merited contempt at the club by asking for grouse in the month of June, and for woodcock in September. I think it is just as well to mention these matters, lest it should be supposed that I desire to sail under false colours. I am acquainted with several men who shoot, and also with some who have shooting to give away. The former very frequently invite me to join their parties at the moors, turnip-fields, and woods; the latter press their shooting on me, especially when I decline on the grounds of disinclination and incapacity.

“I wish I had your chances, Brown,” howls poor little Binks, who can bring down any known bird at any given distance. “You’re always getting invitations because you *can’t* shoot; and I cannot



get one because I *can*. It's too bad, by George!—it's too bad!”

One lovely morning in the month of September I was sauntering along the shady side of Sackville Street, Dublin, when a gentleman, encased in a coat of a resounding pattern, all over pockets, and whose knickerbockers seemed especially constructed to meet the requirements of the coat, suddenly burst upon, and clutched me.

“The very man I wanted,” he exclaimed. “I've been hunting you the way O'Mulligan's pup hunted the fourpenny bit through the bonfire.”

“What can I do for you, Mr Podgers?” I asked.

“I want a day's shooting at O'Rooney's of Ballybawn,” responded Podgers.

Now, I was not intimate with Mr O'Rooney. We had met at the club; but as he was a smoking man, and as I, after a prolonged and terrific combat with a very mild cigar (what must the strong ones be!), had bidden a long farewell to the Indian weed, it is scarcely necessary to mention that, although Mr O'Rooney and myself were very frequently beneath the same roof, we very seldom encountered one another, save in a casual sort of way.

“I assure you, Mr Podgers, that I——”

“Pshaw! that's all gammon,” he burst in antici-

patingly. "You can do it if you like. Sure we won't kill *all* the game. And I have the loveliest dog that ever stood in front of a bird. I want to get a chance of showing him off. He'll do you credit."

I was anxious to oblige Podgers. He had stood by me in a police-court case once upon a time, and proved an *alibi* such as must have met the approval even of the immortal Mr Weller himself; so I resolved upon soliciting the required permission, and informed Podgers that I would acquaint him with the result of my application.

"That's a decent fellow. Come back to my house with me now, and I'll give you a drop of John Jameson that will make your hair curl."

Declining to have my hair curled through the instrumentality of Mr Jameson's unrivalled whisky, I wended my way towards the club, and, as luck would have it, encountered O'Rooney lounging on the steps enjoying a cigar.

After the conventional greetings, I said, "By the way, you have some capital partridge shooting at Ballybawn."

"Oh, pretty good," was the reply, in that self-satisfied, complacent tone in which a crack billiard-player refers to the spot-stroke, or a rifleman to his score when competing for the Queen's Prize.

"I'm no shot myself—I never fired a gun in my



life ; but there's a particular friend of mine who is most anxious to have *one* day's shooting at Ballybawn. Do you think you could manage to let him have it ? ”

I emphasised the word “one” in the most impressive way.

“ I would give one or two days, Mr Brown, with the greatest pleasure ; but the fact is, I have lent my dogs to Sir Patrick O'Houlahan.”

“ Oh, as to that, my friend has a splendid dog—a most remarkable dog. I hear it's a treat to see him in front of a bird.”

I stood manfully by Podgers' exact words, adding some slight embellishments, in order to increase O'Rooney's interest in the animal.

“ In that case, there can be no difficulty, Mr Brown. I leave for Ballybawn on Saturday—will you kindly name Monday, as I would, in addition to the pleasure of receiving you and your friend, like to witness the performance of this remarkable dog ; and I *must* be in Galway on Wednesday.”

Having settled the preliminaries so satisfactorily, I wrote the following note to Podgers :—

“ DEAR PODGERS,

“ It's all right. Mr O'Rooney has named Monday. *Be sure to bring the dog, as his dogs are away.*

Come and breakfast with me at eight o'clock, as the train starts from the King's Bridge Terminus at nine o'clock.—Yours,

“BENJAMIN B. BROWN.

“P.S.—*I praised the dog sky high.* O'R. is most anxious to see him in front of the birds.”

I received a gushing note in reply, stating that he would breakfast with me, and bring the dog, adding, “It's some time since he was shot over; but that makes no difference, as he is the finest dog in Leinster.”

Knowing Podgers to be a very punctual sort of person, I had ordered breakfast for eight o'clock sharp, and consequently felt somewhat surprised when the timepiece chimed the quarter past.

I consulted his letter—day, date, and time were recapitulated in the most businesslike way. Some accident might have detained him. Perhaps he preferred meeting me at the station. I had arrived at this conclusion, and had just made the first incision into a round of buttered toast, when a very loud, jerky, uneven knocking thundered at the hall door, and the bell was tugged with a violence that threatened to drag the handle off.



I rushed to the window, and perceived Podgers clinging frantically to the area railings with one hand, whilst with the other he held a chain, attached to which, at the utmost attainable distance, stood, or stretched, in an attitude as if baying the moon, the fore legs planted out in front, the hind legs almost *clutching* the granite step, the eyes betraying an inflexible determination not to budge one inch from the spot—a bony animal, of a dingy white colour, with dark patches over the eyes, imparting a mournfully dissipated appearance—the redoubtable dog which was to afford us a treat “in front of the birds.”

“Hollo, Podgers!” I cried, “you’re late!”

“This cursed animal,” gasped Podgers; “he got away from me in Merrion Square after a cat. The cat climbed up the Prince Consort statue. This brute, somehow or other got up after her. She was on the head, and he was too high for me to reach him, when I got the hook of this umbrella and——”

At this moment the hall-door opened, and the dog being animated with an energetic desire to explore the interior of the house, suddenly relaxed the pull upon the chain, which utterly unexpected movement sent Podgers flying into the hall as though he had been discharged from a catapult. My maid-of-

all-work, an elderly lady with proclivities in the direction of "sperrits," happened to stand right in the centre of the doorway when Podgers commenced his unpremeditated bound. He cannoned against her, causing her to reel and stagger against the wall, and to clutch despairingly at the nearest available object to save herself from falling. That object happened to be the curly hair of my acrobatic friend, to which her five fingers clung as the suckers of the octopus cling to the crab. By the aid of this substantial support she had just righted herself, when the dog, finding himself comparatively free, made one desperate plunge into the hall, entwining his chain round the limbs of the lady in one dexterous whirl which levelled her, with a very heavy thud, on the body of the prostrate Podgers. Now, whether she was animated with the idea that she was in bodily danger from both master and dog, and that it behoved her to defend herself to the uttermost extent of her power, I cannot possibly determine; but she commenced a most vigorous onslaught upon both, bestowing a kick and a cuff alternately with an impartiality that spoke volumes in favour of her ideas upon the principles of even—and indeed I may add, heavy—handed justice.

I arrived upon the scene in time to raise the prostrate form of my friend, and to administer such



words of consolation and sympathy as, under the circumstances, were his due. His left eye betrayed symptoms of incipient inflammation, and his mouth gave evidence of the violence with which Miss Bridget Byrne (the lady in the case) had brought her somewhat heavy knuckle-dusters into contact with it.

"Bringin' wild bastes into a gintleman's dacent house, as if it was a barn, that's manners!" she muttered. "Av I can get a clout at that dog, I'll lave him as bare as a plucked thrush!"

At this instant a violent crash of crockery-ware was heard in the regions of the kitchen.

"Holy Vargin! but the baste is on the dhresser! *I'll* dhress the villian!" and seizing upon a very stout ash stick which stood in the hall, she darted rapidly in the direction from whence the dire sounds were proceeding.

"Hold hard, woman!" cried Podgers. "He's a very valuable animal. I'll make good any damage. Use your authority, Brown," he added, appealing to me. "She's a terrible person this; she'd stop at nothing."

Ere I could interpose, a violent skirmishing took place, in which such exclamations as "Take that, ye divvle! Ye'll brake me chaney, will ye? There's chaney for ye!" followed by very audible whacks,

which, if they had fulfilled their intended mission, would very speedily have sent the dog to the happy hunting-grounds of his race. One well-directed blow, however, made its mark, and was succeeded by a whoop of triumph from Miss Byrne and a yell of anguish from her vanquished foe.

“Gelang, ye fireside spaniel! Ye live on the neighbours. How dar’ ye come in here? Ye’ll sup sorrow. I’ll give a couple more av I can get at ye.”

Podgers rushed to the rescue, and, after a very protracted and exciting chase, during which a well-directed blow, intended by Bridget for the sole use and benefit of the dog, had alighted on the head of its master, succeeded in effecting a capture. This, too, was done under embarrassing circumstances; for the dog had sought sanctuary within the sacred precincts of Miss Byrne’s sleeping apartment, beneath the very couch upon which it was the habit of that lady to repose her virgin form after the labours of the day; and her indignation knew no bounds when Podgers, utterly unmindful of the surroundings, hauled forth the dog.

“There’s no dacency in man nor baste. They’re all wan, sorra a lie in it!”

At this crisis Podgers must have developed his pecuniary resources, for her tone changed with



marvellous rapidity, and her anger was melted into a well-feigned contrition for having used her fists so freely.

"Poor baste! shure it's frightened he is. I wudn't hurt a fly, let alone an illigant tarrier like that. Thry a bit o' beefsteak in regard o' yer eye, sir. Ye must have hot it agin somethin' hard; it will be as black as a beetle in tin minits."

Podgers uttered full-flavoured language. I looked at my watch and found that we could only "do" the train. Having hailed an outside car, the breakfastless Podgers seated himself upon one side, whilst I took the other, and after a very considerable expenditure of hard labour and skilful strategy, in which we were aided by the carman and Miss Byrne, we succeeded in forcing Albatross (the pointer) into the well in the middle. I am free to confess that I sat with my back to that animal with considerable misgivings. He looked hungry and vicious, and as though a piece of human flesh would prove as agreeable to his capacious maw as any other description of food. It was his habit, too, during our journey, to elevate his head in the air, and to give utterance to a series of the most unearthly howlings, which could only be partially interrupted, not by any means stopped, by Podgers' hat being

pressed closely over the mouth, whilst Podgers punched him *a tergo* with no very light hand.

"That's the quarest dog I ever seen," observed the driver. "He ought to be shupayrior afther badgers. He has a dhrop in his eye like a widdy's pig, and it's as black as a Christian's afther a ruction."

"He's a very fine dog, sir," exclaimed Podgers, in a reproving tone.

"He looks as if he'd set a herrin'," said the cabman jocosely.

"Mind your horse, sir!" said Podgers angrily.

The driver, who was a jovial-tempered fellow, finding that his advances towards "the other side" were rejected, turned towards mine.

"Are you goin' huntin' wid the dog, sir?" he asked.

"We're going to shoot," I replied, in a dignified way.

"To shoot! Thin, begorra, yez may as well get off the car an' fire away at wanst. There's an illigant haystack foreninst yez, and—but here we are"—and he jerked up at the entrance to the station.

The jerk sent Albatross flying off the car, and his chain being dexterously fastened to the back rail of the driver's seat, the luckless animal remained suspended whilst his collar was being



unfastened, in order to prevent the not very remote contingency of strangulation. Finding himself at liberty, he bounded joyously away, and, resisting all wiles and blandishments on the part of his master, continued to bound, gambol, frisk, bark, and yowl in a most reckless and idiotic way. It would not be acting fairly towards Podgers were I to chronicle his language during this festive outbreak. If the dog was in a frolicsome mood, Podgers was not, and his feelings got considerably the better of him when the bell rang to announce the departure of the train within three minutes of that warning.

Finding that all hopes of securing the animal in the ordinary way were thin as air, Podgers offered a reward of half-a-crown to any of the grinning bystanders who would bring him the dog dead or alive. This stimulus to exertion sent twenty corduroyed porters and as many amateurs in full pursuit of Albatross, who ducked and dived, and twisted and twined, and eluded detention with the agility of a greased sow; and it was only when one very corpulent railway official fell upon him in a squashing way, and during a masterly struggle to emerge from beneath the overwhelming weight, that he was surrounded and led in triumph, by as many of his pursuers as could obtain a handful of his hair, up to his irate and wrathful master. Each of the captors

who were in possession of Albatross claimed a half-crown, refusing to give up the animal unless it was duly ransomed; and it was during a fierce and angry discussion upon this very delicate question that the last bell rang. With one despairing tug, Podgers pulled the dog inside the door of the station, which was then promptly closed, and through the intervention of a friendly guard our *bête noire* was thrust into the carriage with us.

Having kicked the cause of our chagrin beneath one of the seats, I ventured to remark that in all probability the dog, instead of being a credit to us, was very likely to prove the reverse.

"It's only his liveliness, and be hanged to him," said Podgers. "He has been shut up for some time, and is as wild as a deer."

He would not admit a diminished faith in the dog; but his tone was irresolute, and he eyed the animal in a very doubting way.

"His liveliness ought to be considerably toned down after the rough handling he received from my servant, and——"

"By the way," Podgers went on, "that infernal woman isn't safe to have in the house; she'll be tried for murder some day, and the coroner will be sitting upon *your* body. Is my eye very black?"

"Not very," I replied. It had reached a dis-



reputable greenish hue, tinged with a tawny red.

At Ballybricken Station we found a very smart trap awaiting us, with a servant in buckskin breeches, and in top-boots polished as brightly as the panels of the trap.

"You've a dog, sir?" said the servant.

"Yes, yes," replied Podgers, in a hurried and confused sort of way.

"In the van, sir?"

"No; he is here—under the seat. Come out, Albatross!—come out, good fellow!" And Podgers chirruped and whistled in what was meant to be a seductive and blandishing manner.

Albatross stirred not.

"Hi! hi! Here, good fellow!"

Albatross commenced to growl.

"Dear me, this is very awkward!" cried Podgers, poking at the animal in a vigorous and irritated way.

"Time's up, sir," shouted the guard, essaying to close the door.

"Hold hard, sir! I can't get my dog out!" cried Podgers.

"I'll get him out," volunteered the guard; and, seizing upon the whip which the smart driver of the smart trap held in inviting proximity, he pro-

ceeded to thrust and buffet beneath the seat where Albatross lay concealed. The dog uttered no sound, gave no sign.

"There ain't no dog there at all," panted the guard, whose exertions rendered him nearly apoplectic, proceeding to explore the recesses of the carriage—"there ain't no dog here."

A shout of terror, and the guard flung himself out of the carriage, the dog hanging on not only to his coat-tails, but to a portion of the garment which their drapery concealed. "Take off your dog—take off your dog. I'll be destroyed. Police! police! I'll have the law of you!" he yelled, in an extremity of the utmost terror.

Podgers, who was now nearly driven to his wits' end, caught Albatross by the neck, and, bestowing a series of well-directed kicks upon the devoted animal, sent him howling off the platform, but right under the train.

The cry of "The dog will be killed!" was raised by a chorus of voices both from the carriages and the platform. Happily, however, the now wary Albatross lay flat upon the ground, and the train went puffing on its way; not, however, until the guard had taken Podgers' name and address, with a view to future proceedings through the medium of the law.



"I had no idea that the O'Rooneys were such swells," observed my companion as we entered, through the massive and gilded gates, to the avenue which sweeps up to Ballybawn House. "Somehow or other, I wish I hadn't fetched Albatross, or that you hadn't spoken about him;" and Podgers threw a gloomy glance in the direction of the pointer, who lay at our feet in the bottom of the trap, looking as if he had been on the rampage for the previous month, or had just emerged from the asylum for the destitute of his species.

"He won't do us much credit as regards his appearance," I said; "but if he is all that you say as a sporting dog—of which I have my doubts—it will make amends for anything."

Podgers muttered something unintelligible, and I saw dismal forebodings written in every line of his countenance.

"Mr O'Rooney received us at the hall-door. Beside him crouched two magnificent setters, with coats as glossy as mirrors, and a bearing as aristocratic as that of Bethgellart.

"Where's the dog?" asked our host, after a warm greeting. "I hope that you have brought him."

I must confess that I would have paid a considerable sum of money to have been enabled to

reply in the negative. I muttered that we had indeed fetched him, but that owing to his having met with some accidents *en voyage*, his personal appearance was considerably diminished; but that we were not to judge books by their covers.

As if to worry, vex, and mortify us, Albatross declined to stir from the bottom of the trap, from whence he was subsequently rooted out in a most undignified and anti-sporting way.

The expression upon Mr O'Rooney's face, when at length the animal, badger-like, was drawn, was that of an intense astonishment, combined with a mirth convulsively compressed. The servants commenced to titter, and the smart little gentleman who tooled us over actually laughed outright.

Albatross was partly covered with mud and offal. His eyes were watery, and the lids were of a dull pink, imparting a sort of maudlin idiocy to their expression. His right ear stood up defiantly, whilst his left lay flat upon his jowl, and his tail seemed to have disappeared altogether, so tightly had he, under the combined influence of fear and dejection, secured it between his legs.

"He's not very handsome," observed our host laughingly, "but I dare say he will take the shine out of York and Lancaster, by-and-by," pointing to the two setters as he spoke.



This hint was enough for Albatross, as no sooner had the words escaped the lips of O'Rooney than, with a yowl which sent the rooks whirling from their nests, he darted from the trap, and, making a charge at York, sent that aristocratic animal flying up the avenue in a paroxysm of terror and despair; whilst Lancaster, paralysed by the suddenness of the onslaught, allowed himself to be seized by the neck, and worried, as a cat worries a mouse, without as much as moving a muscle in self-defence.

This was too much. I had borne with this hideous animal too long. My patience was utterly exhausted, and all the bad temper in my composition began to boil up. I had placed myself under an obligation to a comparative stranger for the purpose of beholding his magnificent and valuable dogs scared and worried by a worthless cur. Seizing upon a garden-rake that lay against the wall, I dealt at Albatross what ought to have proved a crushing blow, which he artfully eluded. It only grazed him, and fell, with almost its full swing and strength, upon the passive setter, who set up a series of unearthly shrieks, almost human in their painful shrillness.

"Chain up that dog at once!" shouted O'Rooney in fierce and angry tones, "and look to Lancaster. I fear that his ribs are broken. This is very

unfortunate," he added, addressing himself to me.

"I don't know what's come over the animal!" exclaimed Podgers. "I wish to heaven I had never seen him. I'll part with him to-morrow, if I have to give him to the Zoological Gardens for the bears."

Luckily, it turned out, upon examination, that Lancaster was not in any way seriously injured. This put us into somewhat better spirits, so that by the time breakfast was concluded we were on good terms with each other, and even with the wretched Albatross, in whom we still maintained a sort of sickly confidence. Later on we started for the turnips, Mr O'Rooney and Podgers in front—the latter hauling Albatross along as if he was a sack of wheat; whilst I brought up the rear with a gamekeeper and York.

"I don't think that animal is used to be out at all, at all," observed the keeper.

"I'm afraid you are quite right," I replied; "but I hear that he is a very good sporting dog."

"Sportin'! Begorra, he'll give yez sport enough before the day is half over," said the keeper, with a gloomy grin.

"There is always a covey to be found in this field," observed our host to Podgers, "so we'll give your dog the first chance."



"I—I—I'd rather you'd let him see what your dog will do," blurted Podgers.

"Oh, dear no!" returned Mr O'Rooney. "Let him go now. You'll take the first shot."

Very reluctantly indeed did Podgers unloose his pointer, uttering into the dog's ear in a low tone the most terrific and appalling threats should he fail to prove himself all that my fancy had painted him. With a loud bark of defiance Albatross darted away, scurrying through the turnips at the rate of fifteen miles an hour, utterly unmindful of whistle, call, blandishment, or threat, appearing now in one direction, now in another, and barking as though it had been part of its training.

"Stop that dog," cried our host, "he won't leave us a bird," as covey after covey of partridges rose beyond range and flew away, Albatross joyously barking after them.

"You said I was to have the first shot, Mr O'Rooney," said Podgers, in a tone full of solemnity.

"Certainly, if you can get it; which I doubt," was the curt reply.

Albatross had dashed within twenty yards of us, and was plunging off in another direction, when Podgers ran forward, raised his gun. Bang!

Albatross was sent to the happy hunting-grounds of his race.

“He frightened the partridge,” observed Podgers, proceeding to reload; “*let him frighten the crows now.*”



## THE DEAD HEAT

No, never had there been such a state of excitement in any ball-room before, when it became known that Captain O’Rooney had entrapped Lieutenant Charles Fortescue, of the Stiffshire Regiment, into a thousand guineas match P.P., owners up, twelve stone each, and four miles over the stiffest country in Galway.

The match had been made at the supper-table, after the ladies had left ; but nevertheless, the news had been carried to them, and they were furious.

“Fancy,” said one, a tall, handsome brunette, “that that little wretched bandy-legged O’Rooney should have got round our handsome friend in such a mean way. He is jealous and disgusted with Fortescue’s waltzing, and he is the best waltzer in Ireland.”

“I’ll make him a set of colours to ride in,” returned the toast of five counties, the beautiful Alice Gwynne. “I never made any before, but ‘there’s luck in odd numbers, says Rory O’More,’ and so he is sure to win in them.”

“Too bad,” exclaimed the gray-haired Colonel of Fortescue’s regiment to some gentlemen standing

by him at the supper-table, "to have hounded the lad into it. O'Rooney is a noted steeplechase rider, and my boy" (he always called the youngsters of his regiment his boys), "though a workman across country, never rode a race in his life; but I hear that Captain O'Rooney has the character of looking up the Griffs."

"Faith, Colonel, ye are about right there," said a jolly-looking young Irishman; "he is just the boy that can do that same; he is mad now because Fortescue's English horse cut him down to-day, and pounded him—a thing that has never been done before."

"Bedad, you're out there, Mat," put in another; "I'd be after thinking it is because the Leaftenant has been making mighty strong running entirely with Alice Gwynne all this blessed night. O'Rooney, by my faith, does not like *that*, devil a hap'orth; he considers himself the favoured one—the consated spalpeen."

"He the favoured one!" remarked big H——, of Fortescue's regiment; "why, he cannot suppose he would have a ghost of a chance with that pug nose and whisky-toddy countenance of his against Fortescue of ours. Why, Old Nick himself could not boast of an uglier face than Pat Rooney. Fortescue is about the handsomest and nicest fellow in the



service, and though only a poor man, yet there are devilish few girls, at least of any taste, who would give him the 'cold shoulder.' "

The conversation was put an end to by the redoubtable Captain O'Rooney they were descanting on, and with whom all seemed to be on such bad terms, walking towards them.

"I will make one endeavour now," said the Colonel, "to put a stop to this match."

"Captain O'Rooney," said he, as that gentleman joined them, "I am sorry to hear of this proposed steeplechase, and for such a sum. Mr Fortescue is a young man, and has acted very foolishly; moreover, though he holds the post of adjutant, he has little, I know, but his pay, and such a loss as a thousand pounds would seriously inconvenience him. Let me recommend, Captain O'Rooney, that Fortescue give you a hundred pounds to-morrow morning and draw the bet. What say you, gentlemen all, is the proposal fair?"

"Nothing fairer," they exclaimed.

"See now, Colonel," said Captain O'Rooney, "let us hear what Mr Fortescue says: he is not here; he'll be found in the ball-room, I'm after thinking."

"True for ye, Captain dear," said the jolly-looking young Irishman before alluded to. "Divil a bit," he continued, with a sly and malicious

twinkle of his blue eye, "is Fortescue in the ball-room. Be jabbers, he is seated in the card-room alone by Alice Gwynne, playing with her bouquet and fan. I'll go and fetch him; but it's a pity to disturb him. I'd almost take my oath he has been asking her to be Mrs Fortescue, and by my soul I don't think she has said no." So saying, the young man, without giving the other time to answer, vanished from the room.

"What is it, Colonel?" said Fortescue, coming in almost immediately after.

"See now," said O'Rooney, interrupting him; "the Colonel says this is a foolish match we have entered into, and proposes that ye should pay me a hundred down to-morrow to let ye off. What d'ye say?"

"What do I say?" replied the young man; "why, I'll do anything the Colonel likes. I think it is a foolish match. I was excited and out of humour when I made it. I'm better now, and if you like to take a hundred and draw, why I'll send you a cheque to-morrow morning for the amount, or run you for a hundred, which you like."

"See, now," said the Captain, his naturally red face getting purple with anger and excitement. "I've heard ye both—the Colonel and yourself; now both of ye hear me. If ye were to offer me nine



hundred and ninety-nine pounds, d—n me if I'd take it, for by the Rock of Cashel, I'll lick ye and break your heart and neck over the country; and see now, Fortescue," he continued, "steer clear of the heiress."

"What do you mean, sir," retorted the young man, firing up. "Steer clear of the heiress? you forget yourself; do you presume to put a lady in the question?" and saying this, he turned away.

"All devilish fine," said O'Rooney, sticking his hands in his pockets and sauntering away from the supper-table, humming a verse of Harry Lorrequer's well-known song:—

"The King of Oude  
Is mighty proud,  
And so were onst the Caysars (Cæsars);  
But ould Giles Eyre  
Would make them stare,  
Av he had them with the Blazers.

To the devil I'd fling—ould Runjeet Singh  
He's only a prince in a small way;  
And knows nothing at all of a six-foot wall,  
Oh! he'd never do for Galway."

"Won't he?" muttered Fortescue to himself, as he caught the last words, "perhaps I'll show you he will." If the Captain had not been so blind with passion, he might have heard the gallant Adjutant

singing *sotto voce* a verse of a song from the same author, as he strode carelessly from the room : —

“ Put his arm round her waist,  
Gave ten kisses at laste,  
‘ Oh ! ’ says he, ‘ you’re my Molly Malone,  
‘ My own,  
‘ Oh ! ’ says he, ‘ you’re my Molly Malone ! ’ ”

What did he mean ?

“ By the great gun of Athlone, I’m mighty glad entirely they’re both gone from the room,” said a hard-riding Galway squire, as the illustrious Captain O’Rooney disappeared from sight. “ I thought there was an illigant row brewing. Better as it is. Where O’Rooney is to get the coin from if he loses, divil a one of me knows. He’s in ‘ Quare Street ’ long ago. Never mind, boys ; let us have the groceries. ‘ O Punch ! you are my darling,’ and the devil fly away with dull care. Now Colonel,” he continued, “ upon my conscience, as O’Rooney won’t listen to reason, you must look after Fortescue’s interests. O’Rooney will endeavour to pick out a country. I mean he will go building up walls, and so on. You must have your own way a little, or, begorra, he’ll do as he likes entirely. Now, there is one thing that will beat him if anything will—you must insist on that, or I would not give a trauncen for Fortescue’s chance—and that is ” (he dropped



his voice to a whisper) *one* if not *two* WATER-jumps; if anything will stop Mad Moll it is WATER."

"It shall be done," said the Colonel; "I'll see that the lad is not taken advantage of." And the old field-officer kept his word, as will be seen in the sequel.

O'Rooney was greatly disturbed when he knew there were to be one or more water-jumps. He fought hard and gallantly against it; but the Colonel was obdurate. "By Gad, sir," said he, "you do not want it entirely your own way, do you? I have not interfered with the country in any way. I have said nothing as to the six-foot wall you have built up, and others equally dangerous, and now you cavil at a paltry ditch."

"Ditch do ye call it, Colonel? fifteen feet of water, hurdled and staked, a ditch, and another of eleven. By my troth, no such like ditches are found between this and Ballinasloe. But never mind. Glory be to Moses, I'll get over them. And then, h—ll to my soul, if the English horse will ever come near Mad Moll's girths again."

"We think nothing of nineteen feet, sir," said the Colonel. "In England, fifteen feet is nothing; but my youngster shall have a chance."

Great was the excitement throughout the country—indeed, in all parts of Ireland. Such a match

had not been known for years—"a thousand pounds!" What could the English soldier have been thinking of! The nags went on well in their training, closely guarded by their respective admirers. The English horse took to wall-jumping beautifully; but it was doubted whether, even with his great turn of speed, he had the foot of the Irish mare—a clipper. Then again, though Fortescue was a cool and daring horseman, he had not the experience of the Captain, who had ridden many a hard-contested race before, across country and over the flat.

The stakes had been made good and deposited according to agreement with the Colonel. The Captain had found friends to share in the bet, for though he was generally disliked, yet they had confidence in his horse and his horsemanship. Fortescue, too, had friends, nor had his commanding officer been idle. Men from his own regiment had come forward, so all he stood to lose was two hundred and fifty; this and other matters made him sanguine and light-hearted. In addition to all, he had received a beautiful cap and jacket from Miss Gwynne.

The sporting papers, English and Irish, teemed with the forthcoming match. "Lieut. Charles Fortescue's bay horse Screwdriver, aged, against Capt. O'Rooney's chestnut mare Mad Moll, six



years old, for ONE THOUSAND guineas a side," appeared in the *County Chronicle*.

The excitement was intense. Such a stiff bit of country had not been seen or ridden over for years. The betting would have been decidedly in favour of the Captain, but his mare's well-known dislike to water prevented anything like odds being laid—so they were both about equal favourites.

"By George, old fellow!" said one of Fortescue's chums to him one morning, some six days previous to the race, "I really think your chance is becoming more rosy every hour. The more O'Rooney's mare sees the water the less she likes it. A sergeant in my company, a Galway man, has a country cousin in the barracks who knows all about it. Just go to Sergeant Blake," he said, turning to a bugler passing by, "and tell him to come here, and bring his cousin with him. Mr Fortescue wishes to see him."

The man soon appeared. "Salute your supareor," said the Sergeant, as he squared his heels. "Touch your caubeen."

"Arrah, now, Patrick, wasn't I after doing it?"

"Well, do it at onst, ye murdering ruffian, and tell all ye know."

"Yes, sir, yer honour," commenced the man, "Faix, the Captain 'av' been trying the mare day

after day at the water. Onst she jumped finely. The Captain made a brook close by our cabin, and is often wid her there. Sometimes she jumps and sometimes she won't; and when she won't, mille murther! maybe don't he larrup her! Long life to your honour! but I don't think the mare likes water, at all, at all. And by my troth, there's many a man thinks the same. The devil's luck to him! he's been all over the fresh-planted praties, and cut them to smithereens, bad cess to him! But av course, Leiftenent, ye won't tell on a poor boy, more by token as he is after doing yer honour a little sarvice. I wouldn't give a handful of prayers for my life if he found me out; for sorra a one knows the Captain better than myself, death to his sowl! Tear-an-ages! he's a terrible bad man entirely, is the Captain. The top of the morning, and long life to your honour!" said the gossoon, as the Sergeant led him away, pocketing half a crown.

"There, Fortescue, what do you think of that?" said his friend, as they sauntered away to the ante-room for a whiskey and soda. "It's evident Mad Moll is no water jumper. By Jupiter! I think you will pull through. Quite fair my giving the lad half-a-crown. O'Rooney's friends have been doing the same—fair play is a jewel!"

Somehow the public at last began to lean towards



the English horse. He did his work quietly and openly, without any attempt at concealment.

But what is this excitement in the barrack yard? Officers are rushing to the mess-room. Two gentlemen have been driven up there in a car. Lord Plunger and his friend Bradon have arrived. They are old friends of the Stiffshire battalion.

“By George! Plunger and Bradon, I’m delighted to see you,” said the warm-hearted Colonel, hastening in, while endeavouring to make his sword-belt meet about his somewhat bulky waist. “I did not tell the boys I had written for you both. Lunch ready in ten minutes—glass of sherry first to wet your mouths. Now, Fortescue will have a little good advice. You will ride the last gallop tomorrow morning, Bradon, and give us your opinion. Damme, I’m so glad to see you both in the wild west. Here, some one tell the captain of the day I won’t have another roll-call. Obligated to do this kind of thing here, Bradon—never know what’s going to happen from one minute to another. Shooting landlords like the devil. Potted Lambert last week; five shots in him, and the only one that did no harm was the one that took him in the forehead. Rest his sowl, as the Irishmen say, a near escape for him. Lucky dog! Here is the sherry!” In this way did the popular Colonel rattle on.

The gallop is over, and Screwdriver has been tried at even weights against a good one. George Bradon had thought it better that Fortescue should ride his own horse in the trial, which he did. "By Jove, you've got a clipper, Fortescue!" said the former, as they pulled up; "you don't know how good. I deceived you all when I told you I had borrowed this nag to try you. Keep your mouth shut, hermetically sealed, old fellow, and I'll tell you something you will care to know. It is no commoner you have galloped against to-day. Mind, on your life, not a word to your dearest friend. It's my own horse, GUARDSMAN, you have had a spin with—the winner of the Cheltenham Grand Annual!"

The young man thus addressed sat like one in a dream, at this revelation.

"It's all old Mason's doing, Fortescue," said he. "He advised me to bring him over. I'm off now. Look at that knot of people coming over the hill; there are some who crossed the Channel yesterday with me who would know my old pet, and I would not have it blown upon for a trifle—the horse has been in Ireland for a week on the quiet. I'm now off, across country to Athenry, where Mason is, and has a stable for him. The horse will leave by the late train to-night for England with a lad; so no one will be a bit the wiser. My old stud-groom will



come to your diggings this evening with me to give you a help. So *au revoir* till mess-time, when you will see yours truly ;” and putting his horse at a five-foot wall, he sent him over, hurling the loose stones behind him in a cloud, and was quickly out of sight.

“So your friend has gone,” said the gallant Colonel, as Fortescue walked his horse up to a host of his brother-officers and friends assembled in a knot on the hill, amongst which several strangers were distinguishable.

“Yes,” replied Fortescue, carelessly, “he will be with us at mess. Here, take the horse home, Forester”—to his man—“see no one comes near him.”

“That’s a horse to back,” said a sly-looking little man in a large drab overcoat ; and coming up to Fortescue he whispered quietly to him : “I’m on your nag for a plumper. I keep my own counsel, and shall not split. I never come except with a rush at the last minute. My glasses are good. You’ve had a spin with one of the best cross-country horses in England. Clever and fast as that nag is, he can’t give you seven pounds. You ran him to a length or two. I know George Bradon and Guardsman well. I’ve won a pot full of money on them before. There, don’t look scared ; you are a young-

ster. Sit well down on Screwdriver, hold him together, don't give a lead over the water, and you will land him a winner. I know more than you think ; but for my own sake I'm MUM !”

“ News for you all !” said the Colonel of Fortescue's regiment, bursting into the mess-room, where some nine or ten officers were at breakfast, amongst whom were Lord Plunger and Bradon. “ Here, Fortescue,” continued the excited old gentleman, “ this letter”—holding out one—“ concerns you more immediately. Read it out.”

The young man thus addressed took the letter and read the following :—

“ DEAR COLONEL,

“ As you all know, this is the morning of the race. Something has happened. For God's sake ride over and see me at once.—

“ Yours faithfully,

“ P. O'ROONEY.

“ Clough-bally-More Castle, Friday morning.”

“ There, gentlemen, what do you think of that ?” cried the Colonel, as Fortescue slowly folded up the letter and returned it to him. “ Something in that—no race for a guinea.”

“ Race or no race,” said Lord Plunger, “ the



money is lodged with you. It is a p.p. bet, and must be paid."

"Mare gone amiss," put in Bradon. "I knew he was giving her too much of it. This is a hard, stony country; horses won't stand much continued work. Poor brutes! they are galloped shin sore—all the life and energy taken out of them—sweated to death, and made as thin as whipping-posts, and they are said to be in condition. Serves him right."

"Hold, Bradon, my boy," interrupted Lord Plunger, "you do not know that such is the case. The mare was all right last night, that I am certain of. She is about six miles from here, at a Mr Blake's. I am inclined to think O'Rooney has got into trouble."

"At any rate we shall soon know," returned the Colonel; "for here is my horse coming round. I shall be back in an hour or a little more. I'll look after your interests, Fortescue," he continued. "It is only half-past ten now. The race is not till three. Keep cool, and don't take too many brandy-and-sodas, till you see me again." And so saying, he took his departure.

What was up? Had the mare broken down? Was O'Rooney arrested? It must be one or the other. It could not be about the stakes, for these

were lodged to the Colonel's credit in the Bank of Ireland. What could it be then?

"I cannot help thinking, Fortescue," said Lord Plunger, "that somehow or other you will have to don the new colours, doeskins, and tops, and give us a sight of your way of crossing the Galway country." As he was speaking, one of the mess waiters came in and said a few words to Fortescue, which made that gentleman immediately leave the room. On reaching his quarters he found seated there a sly-looking little man in a large drab overcoat.

"I beg your pardon," said the stranger to the officer as he entered. "You know me, I think?"

Fortescue slightly inclined his head.

"The object of my coming," continued the sly-looking little man, "is to tell you that there is a writ out against Captain O'Rooney for four hundred pounds. He will not show up to-day. He is a *Sunday man*: now the race is ours—yours I ought to say—you will only have to go over the course. Good-morning."

But he was not allowed to depart in that way. He was soon in the mess-room, and all were put in possession of the facts.

In the meantime the good Colonel rode on at a rapid pace, wondering at the contents of the note, and conjuring up all sorts of things. Five-and-



twenty minutes brought him to the gate, or what should have been the gate, of Clough-bally-More Castle, but it was gone. Cantering up the neglected wilderness-like avenue, he was soon in front of a ruinous-looking pile. This was Clough-bally-More Castle—a place best described by a quotation from Hood's beautiful poem of "The Haunted House"—

"Unhinged the iron gates half open hung,  
Jarr'd by the gusty gales of many winters,  
That from its crumbled pedestal had flung  
One marble globe in splinters.

\*            \*            \*            \*            \*

"With shatter'd panes the grassy court was starr'd ;  
The time-worn coping-stone had tumbled after ;  
And through the ragged roof the sky shone, barr'd  
With naked beam and rafter."

Getting off his horse and walking up the broken, moss-covered steps, the Colonel rang the bell, which gave forth a melancholy sound that scared a colony of jackdaws who had established themselves unmolested for many a year in the chimneys and uninhabited rooms.

On the second summons a shock head was cautiously poked out of an upper window. "Sure now, it's no use at all, at all, av yer ringing away like that: the master's gone abroad these six months; he told me to say so last night. Divil a

writ can you serve him wid, my honey ; av ye don't be off the master will be after shooting ye for a thafe from the hall windy."

" I'm no writ server," returned the Colonel. " I come in consequence of a note I received from Captain O'Rooney this morning."

" Troth, then, ye are the English soldier colonel. His honour the master will be wid ye at onst," and the head disappeared.

Presently that of the Captain protruded.

" See now, Colonel," said he, " ould Mat thought you were a Bum. I'm sorry to say I'm a *Sunday man* now. The thundering thieves they've been about the place all the morning to serve me. I wish they may get it. Nabocklish ! catch a weasel asleep. I'll let you in."

In a minute or so the front door was slowly and cautiously unchained, and the Colonel found himself in the hall of Clough-bally-More Castle. It was a perfect ruin, and, if possible, more ghastly and miserable-looking on the inside than the outside. The Captain's room was, however, pretty cosy, and in decent repair. A bright turf fire burnt on the hearth ; a couple of guns adorned the walls ; rods, fishing-tackle, and various other sporting paraphernalia were scattered about the room in indescribable confusion.



"Be seated, Colonel," said the steeple-chase rider; "I may as well come to the point at once. D—, of Galway, has a writ out against my person for four hundred pounds. They tried to serve it on me last night, and again this morning, the devil fly away with them! May the flames of——"

"What is to be done, Capt. O'Rooney?" interrupted the Colonel. "You know it is a p.p. bet, and out of my power to do anything. Mr Fortescue has only two hundred and fifty on it. The rest is made up by gentlemen who will insist on the terms of the bet being adhered to. You ridiculed our offer of scratching the bet for a hundred: far better for yourself had you done so. I should not like any advantage taken of you, and you ought to have a run for your money. What is it you propose?"

"See, now, Colonel; the only way is, that if you do not hold me to the day, we can run it off on Sunday."

"Sir! Captain O'Rooney!" hotly interrupted the Colonel; "you must be mad! Ride a steeple-chase on a Sunday! Do you suppose, sir, any of my officers would be guilty of such a thing, or that I would allow it?"

"See, now, Colonel," interposed the Captain, "then there is no other way but Mr Fortescue let-

ting me off altogether. I've five hundred on it on my own account. I'll give a hundred and scratch it."

"Quite impossible," said the Colonel; "you know I can't do it. I am really very sorry for you? but stay, there is yet one way, and if I can manage it the race may yet come off. D——, who has the writ out against you, does the wine for the mess. Now, will you agree to this—that if you win, I pay him the four hundred and the balance to yourself? If you do not win you shall be exactly in the same position you are now, namely, locked up in your own house."

"Tare an' ages, a capital idea! Colonel, I agree." And it was forthwith signed and sealed between them.

"I'll send out to you in an hour," said the Colonel, as he took his departure. "I will write and tell you how it is to be, race or no race. Depend on me; I'll do all I can."

The Colonel succeeded, and the terms he mentioned were acceded to by D——, who thought it was his only chance of ever getting a farthing.

"Hang it, gentlemen," said the light-hearted old officer, "we could have got the money without a race; but I should not have liked it said of the regiment that we took any advantage. Now, win



or lose, everyone must say that we have behaved pluckily in this matter."

Such a crowd as there was on the road all the way to the hill of Thonabuckey, where a good view could be had of the race! Cars, donkey-carts, wiry-looking horses with wiry and sporting squireens on them crowded the road—all on their way to see the thousand-guinea steeple-chase between the English soldier gentleman and the famous Captain O'Rooney.

Such excitement, such running and jostling of the dirty unwashed to get along! There was the old blind fiddler, Mat Doolan, in a donkey-cart, and perched on the top of a porter-barrel, scraping away, and occasionally giving a song.

"Sure it's himself that can bring the music out of the instrument. He is the best fiddler in the west," sang out one. Then a chorus of voices would break in asking for various tunes and songs. "Arrah, now, give us 'Croppies lie down.'"  
" 'Wreath the bowl,' " cried another. "Hell to the bowl, let's 'ave 'Tater, Jack Walsh,' or 'Vinegar Hill,' " demanded a sturdy ruffian. "No, no; 'The breeze that blows the barley,' 'St Patrick's day in the morning,' or 'Garry-owen' for me." "Begorra, no; 'Larry before he was stretched,' is my favourite," said a ragged urchin.

"Hurrah! here comes the Captain," bawled

another; and the dirty unwashed yelled as he passed in a tax-cart driven by a friend.

“Which is the Captain?” demanded a soldier.

“Death! don’t you know him? Musha, why that one forenent ye in the white caubeen and frieze coat. Troth, he’s a broth of a boy! devil a one in Ireland can bate him on Mad Moll across country. Sure he’s an illigant rider.”

“Hould yer noise, here comes Squire Gwynne and the ladies in the coach, and the English soldier gentleman wid ’em. Agra! but he’s a mighty fine young man is that same. Bedad, it’s Miss Alice that’s looking swate on him entirely.”

It was true: there was Charles Fortescue of the Stiffshire Regiment going to the scene of action in the Squire’s waggonette, and sitting beside his affianced bride, the beautiful Alice Gwynne with eight thousand a year the instant she married.

“Hurroo!” shouted the people as the carriage dashed past. “Three cheers for the Master of Gwynne! And another for the lady!” They were in the humour to shout at everything and everybody.

The course is reached at last. It is a circular one, and everything has to be jumped twice; hardly anything is to be seen but dark frowning walls. Many cars and carriages have got down by the



water-jump. There is no end of youth and beauty. All the county *élite* are there as lookers-on. A place has been kept for Mr Gwynne, and also one for the large waggonette of the officers. Eager spectators are scattered all over the course, but the big wall and the two water-jumps are the centre of attraction. The wall is a fearful one, six feet high, built up of large loose stones. The water-jump is also a pretty good one. A little mountain stream has been dammed up. It is fifteen feet wide, four feet deep, and hurdled and staked on the taking off side.

"By Jingo, it is a twister!" said Mr Gwynne, a hunting man, as he looked at it. "I say, Ally," to his daughter, "you would not like to ride over that, would you?"

"No, indeed, papa," said the poor girl, with her beautiful eyes full of tears — she was terribly agitated. "I never shall be able to look at Charles as he jumps it: it's fearful to look at, and it has to be done twice too!"

"Never mind, Alice, dear," said Fortescue, "the old horse will carry me over like a bird. The only difficulty in the whole thing is the big wall; that is a rattler! but in your colours, of course, I shall get over all right. Let me do that wall and I am pretty safe, for I know Screwdriver has the foot of Mad Moll; and these colours, too, they must not

play second fiddle. "Cheer up!" and he whispered something that made the fair girl smile through her tears.

"Now, Fortescue," said George Bradon, taking his friend aside, "let me give you a little advice: this is your maiden effort: whatever you do be cool; don't flurry or worry yourself; you have a knowing fellow to ride against, who is well up to these things. Now the wall is the principal thing, and my opinion is, he will try and baulk your horse there; therefore, my boy, don't let him give you a lead over it, *but lead him*. That you have the speed of the mare there is not a doubt. Remember, too, you must not go at the wall too fast: keep him well together, with his hind legs well under him, and pop him over. Now, with regard to the brook, on no account give him a lead there; if necessary, walk your horse to it rather than go first. Keep your head, old fellow, and where you dare, make the pace a cracker, if you can do it without pumping your horse; the mare is overtrained, and will not last if she is hustled. I don't know that I can say any more: now, go and sit by your lady fair till it is time to weigh."

The officers had sent their two cricket tents down, the scoring one for the scales, and the other for luncheon. The latter one was filled with gentle-



men discussing the merits of the different horses.

"Here comes your nag, Fortescue," said a young sub, running up to the carriage.

"Oh, what a beauty he is!" said Miss Gwynne. "Who is the little fat man leading him?"

"That," said Bradon, who had joined them, "is my old stud-groom, one of the best men in Europe; he says Screwdriver's trained to the hour. Here, Mason, turn the horse round and show him to the lady."

The old man touched his hat as he did so.

"He's a good 'un, miss," he said, "and nothing but a good 'un; and if Mr Fortescue rides him patiently, I think that no Mad Moll will have a chance with him." And touching his hat again he turned and walked the horse away.

The regimental champion was then immediately surrounded by the men of the Stiffshire Regiment.

The weighing is over, and Screwdriver mounted. Fortescue's colours are crimson, with gold braiding. Capt. O'Rooney's are all green. Both gentlemen look thorough jocks, and sit their horses easily and well; but there is a look of the older hand about the Captain.

"Who will lay me two to one against Screwdriver?" cried out a sly-looking little man in a

large drab overcoat. "I'll do it to any amount up to a thousand."

"I'll take you even money for a hundred," said a flashily-dressed man on a bay horse.

"I want odds, sir," said the little man; "but as I see there is no betting to be done here, make it two hundred and I'll take you."

"Done," said the other. And the bets were booked.

All is now excitement, for the horses are walking away to the starting-post. The judge had locked himself up in the little box allotted to him, which has been lent by the race committee, but little did he think he would see such a close finish.

"They're off!" is the cry, as the two horses are seen cantering across a field.

"Fortescue's leading," said Lord Plunger, with his field-glasses to his eyes.

"Oh, papa, hold me up so that I may see," said the beautiful and anxious Miss Gwynne.

The eyes of scores were on her as she stood up, for all the gentry were well aware in what relation she stood to Fortescue.

"Well lepped!" roared the multitude, as the horses topped a wall.

"Capital jumpers both," said the sly-looking little man; "the horse for my money. Will nobody



bet?" he roared out. But all were too eager to attend to him.

Fortescue is in front, and going at a good rate across some grass. The first brook is now approached, and the Captain in his turn, leads at a strong pace. All are anxiously looking to see how Mad Moll will like it, for she is twisting her head from side to side. Fortescue has taken a pull at Screwdriver, who is some six lengths behind.

"Hang me if she means jumping!" said Bradon, as he saw the mare's spiral movements.

But he was wrong: a resolute man and a good one was on her back. She jumped the brook, but in bad style, her hind legs dropped in, and as she just righted herself, Fortescue's crimson jacket flashed in the air and cleared it splendidly, amidst the shouts of hundreds.

"Splendidly jumped!" said Lord Plunger. Fortescue is a fine horseman, Bradon, and is riding the horse patiently and well."

"He is," was the quiet reply.

All eyes are now directed to the wall, which the horses are rapidly approaching. Fortescue is seen to lead at it, and the old horse clears it at a bound, as did the mare.

"It's all up," said Bradon, as he closes his glasses; "Fortescue will win in a canter."

"The Captain's down!" screamed a host of voices, as he and the mare came to grief at the second water-jump.

"May he stick there for the next ten minutes!" muttered the sly little man, a wish in which not a few joined—a certain fair lady especially.

But he is up and at work again, none the worse. The horses were going at a great pace, and the jumps were taken with beautiful precision by both. Bradon began to look anxious, the sly little man fidgety, and Lord Plunger wore a thoughtful look.

The anxious girl's face was flushed to scarlet with excitement and emotion, and she trembled fearfully.

"It will be a close thing," said the sly-looking little man; "the mare is better than I thought."

There were only a few things to be jumped now of any consequence—the two brooks and the big wall. The horses there turned, ran through an opening made in the wall, and finished on the flat in front of the carriages. The brook is now approached for the second time: the mare comes at it first, jumps it, and topples down on her nose on the opposite side; the Captain is pitched forward on her ears, but recovers himself like lightning, and is away again, leading Fortescue at a terrific pace.

But what is the little sly man doing? As the mare recovers herself he is seen to dart across the



course and pick up something flat, and put it into his pocket. "By G—d! turn out as it will we are saved," he muttered. "I'll lay any money against the mare," he screamed out. But no one took him.

The wall is now approached again; the Captain leads; but as the mare is about to rise he turns her sharply round and gallops in a different direction. Screwdriver refuses it too.

"Damnation! I thought it," said Bradon; "there's a blackguard's trick!"

"Oh! poor Charles," ejaculated the beautiful Alice; "my poor colours!"

"The Captain's cleared it!" shouted out the multitude, as the mare was seen to take the wall splendidly.

"Where's your soldier now?" shouted out a chorus of voices.

"Shure it's myself," said the captain, "could never be licked."

"Most unfortunate!" said the old Colonel, "a dirty trick; and after my kindness to him, too!"

"The soldier is going at it again!" cried the people; and the horse is seen to rise gallantly at it, but both horse and rider came down on the other side.

"Och, wirra wirra, vo vo! Mother of Moses,

he's kilt entirely !" bawled out a countryman ; " poor young fellow ! "

" Miss Gwynne's fainted," said a young sub, running into the tent for water.

" By G—d ! he's up and at it again," screamed out the sly little man : " the mare's baked too ; look at her tail."

All faces were flushed and eager. The horse was coming along at a tremendous pace. The captain was at work : his legs could be seen sending the spurs deeply into her ; and he took an anxious look over his shoulder every now and then.

" The mare's beaten !" resounded on all sides, as she was seen to swerve in her stride.

" Oh that the finish were only a hundred yards farther !" said Lord Plunger.

The winning-post is approached. The old horse has not been touched by Fortescue, whose face is seen, even at that distance, to be deluged with blood. He holds Screwdriver well in hand ; he sees the mare is flagging.

" Green wins !" " Red wins !" shouts the crowd.

It is an anxious moment. Both horses are seen locked closely together. But the strain on Screwdriver's jaw is relaxed, and Fortescue is seen to shake him up ; the whip hand is at work, and they pass the post abreast. The Colonel dashes



off, as does the sly little man, and a host of others.

"What is it?" said the Colonel, as he galloped up.

"A DEAD HEAT," replied the judge.

The sly little man smiles grimly as he hears these words.

"Is Charles hurt, papa?" said the beautiful occupant of the Master of Gwynne's carriage, opening her eyes languidly, as she rose from her faint.

"No, dearest; cut a little, I believe. It is a dead heat."

Both horses were now returning to scale.

"Dead heat?" said the Captain. "Well, we must run it off in an hour. "I won't give in."

"Hurt, sir?" inquired old Mason, as he took hold of the old horse's bridle and led him back.

"A bit of a cut on the forehead," returned Fortescue, "that is all. Captain O'Rooney pulled his mare round at the wall—little cad!"

"A scoundrel's trick," said the Colonel.

Fortescue goes to weigh in first.

"All right, sir," said the man in charge of the scales.

The Captain now approaches, saddle and saddle-cloths in hand, and seats himself.

"Eleven stone eleven," said he of the scales, looking at them intently. "Three pounds short, Captain."

“What?” yelled out O’Rooney. “Look again, man, look again!”

“Eleven stone eleven,” replied the clerk.

“Give me my bridle!” roared the Captain. “What the h—ll is the matter?”

“Ay, give him his bridle!” said the sly-looking little man; “he can claim a pound for it; but that won’t make him right. Look at your saddle-cloth, sir. You will see it has burst and a three-pounds lead gone. You did it at the big water-jump the second time, and I picked it up. Here it is.”

Cheer after cheer rent the air as the fact was announced. The soldiers, of course, went almost frantic.

“Here, come away,” said Lord Plunger and Bradon, seizing Charley’s arm, “Get away as quickly as you can. There will be a row. Your horse has already gone, with seventy or eighty of our men with him. You rode the race splendidly, old fellow!”

“That he did,” said the sly-looking little man.

The Captain had lost the race. He was short by two pounds, allowing him one for his bridle. The scene of confusion that followed was indescribable.

Fortescue was taken to the carriage and quickly driven away.



“ Ah, Alice ! ” said he, “ I told you I should carry your colours to the fore.”

“ Thank God you did so ! This is your first and last race, promise me.”

The Captain went back to Clough-bally-More Castle ; but in a day or two he was *non est*, and his creditors were done.

The regiment had a jovial night of it. Fortescue's health was drunk in bumper after bumper ; but he was not there to acknowledge the compliment ; some one else had him in charge.

A short time after the Stiffshire were quartered in Manchester, and the Colonel one day encountered no less a person than Captain O'Rooney.

“ See now, Colonel,” said the latter, “ you must bear me no ill-will. I did a shabby trick, I'll allow, at the wall, but I was a ruined man. I'm all right now. I've married a rich cotton-spinner's widow with some three thousand a year ; but it's all settled on her.”

Fortescue and Miss Gwynne are long ago married ; and at the different race meetings that they attended they often saw the celebrated Captain O'Rooney performing ; but in all the numerous races he was engaged in, he never rode—at any rate in a steeple-chase—another DEAD HEAT.

## ONLY THE MARE

WHEN one opens a suspicious-looking envelope and finds something about “ Mr Shopley’s respectful compliments ” on the inside of the flap, the chances are that Mr Shopley is hungering for what we have Ovid’s authority for terming *irritamenta malorum*. Not wishing to have my appetite for breakfast spoiled, I did not pursue my researches into a communication of this sort which was amongst my letters on a certain morning in November ; but turned over the pile until the familiar caligraphy of Bertie Peyton caught my eye : for Bertie was Nellie’s brother, and Nellie Peyton, it had been decided, would shortly cease to be Nellie Peyton ; a transformation for which I was the person chiefly responsible. Bertie’s communication was therefore seized with avidity. It ran as follows :—

“ The Lodge, Holmesdale.

“ MY DEAR CHARLIE,

“ I sincerely hope that you have no important engagements just at present, as I want you down here most particularly.



“ You know that there was a small race-meeting at Bibury the other day. I rode over on Little Lady, and found a lot of the 14th Dragoons there ; that conceited young person Blankney amongst the number. Now, although Blankley has a very considerable personal knowledge of the habits and manners of the ass, he doesn't know much about the horse ; and for that reason he saw fit to read us a lecture on breeding and training, pointing his moral and adorning his tale with a reference to my mare—whose pedigree, you know, is above suspicion. After, however, he had kindly informed us what a thoroughbred horse ought to be, he looked at Little Lady and said, ‘ Now I shouldn't think that thing was thoroughbred ! ’ It ended by my matching her against that great raw-boned chestnut of his : three and a half miles over the steeplechase course, to be run at the Holmesdale Meeting, on the 5th December.

“ As you may guess, I didn't want to win or lose a lot of money, and when he asked what the match should be for, I suggested ‘ £20 a-side. ’ ‘ Hardly worth while making a fuss for £20 ! ’ he said, rather sneeringly. ‘ £120, if you like ! ’ I answered, rather angrily, hardly meaning what I said ; but he pounced on the offer. Of course I couldn't retract, and so very stupidly, I plunged deeper into the mire, and made several bets with the fellows who were round

us. They laid me 3 to 1 against the mare, but I stand to lose nearly £500.

“You see now what I want. I ride quite 12 stone, as you know; the mare is to carry 11 stone, and you can just manage that nicely. I know you’ll come if you can, and if you telegraph I’ll meet you.

“Your’s ever,

BERTIE PEYTON.

“P.S.—Nellie sends love, and hopes to see you soon. No one is here, but the aunt is coming shortly.”

I was naturally anxious to oblige him, and luckily had nothing to keep me in town; so that afternoon saw me rapidly speeding southwards, and the evening, comfortably domiciled at The Lodge.

Bertie, who resided there with his sister, was not a rich man. £500 was a good deal more than he could afford to lose, and poor little Nellie was in a great flutter of anxiety and excitement in consequence of her brother’s rashness. As for the mare, she could gallop and jump; and though we had no means of ascertaining the abilities of Blankney’s chestnut, we had sufficient faith in our Little Lady to enable us to “come up to the scratch smiling;” and great hopes that we should be enabled to laugh at the result in strict accordance with the permission given in the old adage, “Let those laugh who win.”



It was not very pleasant to rise at an abnormal hour every morning, and arrayed in great-coats and comforters sufficient for six people, to rush rapidly about the country; but it was necessary. I was a little too heavy, and we could not afford to throw away any weight, nor did I wish to have my saddle reduced to the size of a cheese-plate, as would have been my fate had I been unable to reduce myself. Breakfast, presided over by Nellie, compensated for all matutinal discomforts; and then she came round to the stables to give the mare an encouraging pat and a few words of advice and endearment which I verily believe the gallant little mare understood, for it rubbed its nose against her shoulder as though it would say, "Just you leave it in my hands—or, rather, to my feet—and I'll make it all right!" Then we started for our gallop, Bertie riding a steady old iron-grey hunter.

The fourth of December arrived, and the mare's condition was splendid. "As fit as a fiddle," was the verdict of Smithers, a veterinary surgeon who had done a good deal of training in his time, and who superintended our champion's preparation; and though we were ignorant of the precise degree of fitness to which fiddles usually attain, he seemed pleased, and so, consequently, were we. Unfortunately on this morning Bertie's old hunter proved

to be very lame, so I was forced to take my last gallop by myself; and with visions of success on the morrow, I passed rapidly through the keen air over the now familiar way; for the course was within a couple of miles of the house, and so we had the great advantage of being able to accustom the mare to the very journey she would have to take.

Bertie was in a field at the back of the stables when I neared home again. "Come on!" he shouted, pointing to a nasty hog-backed stile, which separated us. I gave Little Lady her head, and she cantered up to it, lighting on the other side like a very bird! Bertie didn't speak as I trotted up to him, but he looked up into my face with a triumphant smile more eloquent than words.

"You've given her enough, haven't you?" he remarked, patting her neck, as I dismounted in the yard.

"You've given her enough," usually signifies "you've given her too much." But I opined not, and we walked round to the house tolerably well convinced that the approaching banking transactions would be on the right side of the book.

Despite a walk with Nellie, and the arrival of a pile of music from town, the afternoon passed rather slowly; perhaps we were too anxious to be cheerful. To make matters worse, dinner was to be postponed



till past eight, for the aunt was coming, and Nellie was afraid the visitor would be offended if they did not wait for her.

"You look very bored and tired, sir!" said Nellie pouting prettily; "I believe you'd yawn if it wasn't rude!"

I assured her that I could not, under any circumstances, be guilty of such an enormity.

"It's just a quarter past seven. We'll go and meet the carriage, and then perhaps you'll be able to keep awake until dinner-time!" and so with a look of dignity which would have been very effective if the merry smile in her eyes had been less apparent, the little lady swept out of the room; to return shortly arrayed in furs, and a most coquettish-looking hat, and the smallest and neatest possible pair of boots, which in their efforts to appear strong and sturdy only made their extreme delicacy more decided.

"Come, sleepy boy!" said she, holding out a grey-gloved hand. I rose submissively, and followed her out of the snug drawing-room to the open air.

Bertie was outside, smoking.

"We are going to meet the aunt, dear," explained Nellie. "I'm afraid she'll be cross, because it's so cold."

"She's not quite so inconsequent as that, I should

fancy ; but it is cold, and isn't the ground hard !” I said.

“ It *is* hard !” cried Bertie, stamping vigorously. “ By Jove ! I hope it's not going to freeze !” and afflicted by the notion—for a hard frost would have rendered it necessary to postpone the races—he hurried off to the stables, to consult one of the men who was weather-wise.

Some stone steps led from the terrace in front of the house to the lawn ; at either end of the top-step was a large globe of stone, and on to one of these thoughtless little Nellie climbed. I stretched out my hand, fearing that the weather had made it slippery, but before I could reach her she slipped and fell.

“ You rash little person !” I said, expecting that she would spring up lightly.

“ Oh ! my foot !” she moaned ; and gave a little shriek of pain as she put it to the ground.

I took her in my arms, and summoning her maid, carried her to the drawing-room.

“ Take off her boot,” I said to the girl, but Nellie could not bear to have her foot touched, and feebly moaned that her arm hurt her.

“ Oh ! pray send for a doctor, sir !” implored the maid, while Nellie only breathed heavily, with half-closed eyes ; and horribly frightened, I rushed off,



hardly waiting to say a word to the poor little sufferer.

"Whatever is the matter?" Bertie cried, as I burst into the harness-room.

"Where's the doctor?" I replied, hastily. "Nellie's hurt herself—sprained her ankle, and hurt her arm—broken it, perhaps!"

"How? When?" he asked.

"There's no time to explain. She slipped down. Where's the doctor?"

"Our doctor is ill, and has no substitute. There's no one nearer than Lawson, at Oakley, and that's twelve miles, very nearly."

"Then I must ride at once," I reply.

"Saddle my horse as quickly as possible," said Bertie to the groom.

"He's lame, sir, can't move!" the man replied, and I remembered that it was so.

"Put a saddle on one of the carriage horses—anything so long as there's no delay."

"They're out, sir! Gone to the station. There's nothing in the stable—only the mare; and to gallop her to Oakley over the ground as it is to-night, will pretty well do for her chance to-morrow—to say nothing of the twelve miles back again. The carriage will be home in less than an hour, sir," the man remonstrated.

“It may be, you don’t know, the trains are so horridly unpunctual. Saddle the mare, Jarvis, as quickly as you can—every minute may be of the utmost value!” As Bertie spoke the *faintest* look of regret showed itself on his face for a second; for of course he knew that such a journey would very materially affect, if it did not entirely destroy, the mare’s chance.

Jarvis, who I think had been speculating, very reluctantly took down the saddle and bridle from their pegs, but I snatched them from his arms, and assisted by Bertie, was leading her out of the stable in a very few seconds.

“Hurry on! Never mind the mare—good thing she’s in condition,” said Bertie, who only thought now of his sister. “I’ll go and see the girl.”

“I can cut across the fields, can’t I, by the cross roads?” I asked, settling in the saddle.

“No! no! Keep to the highway; it’s safer at night. Go on!” I heard him call as I went at a gallop down the cruelly hard road.

The ground rang under the mare’s feet, and in spite of all my anxiety for Nellie I could not help feeling one pang of regret for Little Lady, whose free, bounding action, augured well for what her chances would have been on the morrow—chances which I felt were rapidly dying out; for if this



journey didn't lame her nothing would. Stones had just been put down as a matter of course ; but there was no time for picking the way, and taking tight hold of her head we sped on.

About a mile from the Lodge I came to the cross-roads. Before me was a long vista of stone—regular rocks, so imperfectly were they broken : to the right was the smoother and softer pathway over the fields—perfect going in comparison to the road. Just over this fence, a hedge, and with hardly another jump I should come again into the highway, saving quite two miles by the cut. Bertie had said “Don't,” but probably he had spoken thoughtlessly, and it was evidently the best thing to do, for the time I saved might be of the greatest value to poor little suffering Nellie ! I pulled up, and drew the mare back to the opposite hedge. She knew her work thoroughly. Three bounds took her across the road : she rose—the next moment I was on my back, shot some distance into the field, and she was struggling up from the ground. There had been a post and rail whose existence I had not suspected, placed some six feet from the hedge on the landing side. She sprang up, no legs were broken ; and I, a good deal shaken and confused, rose to my feet, wondering what to do next. I had not had time to collect my

thoughts when I heard the rattle of a trap on the road; it speedily approached, and the moonlight revealed the jolly features of old Tom Heathfield, a friendly farmer.

“Accident, sir?” he asked, pulling up. “What! Mr Vaughan!” as he caught sight of my face. “What’s the——why! that ain’t the mare, sure-*lie*?”

All the neighbourhood was in a ferment of excitement about the races, and the sight of Little Lady in such a place at such a time struck horror to the honest old farmer.

“Yes, it is—I’m sorry to say. Miss Peyton has met with an accident. I was going for the doctor, and unfortunately there was nothing else in the stable.”

“You was going to Oakley, I s’pose, sir? It’ll be ruination to the mare. Miss Peyton hurt herself! I’ll bowl over, sir; it won’t take long; this little horse o’ mine can trot a good ’un; and I can bring the doctor with me. The fences, there, is mended with wire. You’d cut the mare to pieces.”

“I can’t say how obliged to you I am——”

“Glad of the opportunity of obliging Miss Peyton, sir; she’s a real lady!” He was just starting when he checked himself. “There’s a little public house about a hundred yards further on; if you



don't mind waiting there I'll send Smithers to look at the mare. I pass his house. All right, sir."

His rough little cob started off at a pace for which I had not given it credit; and I slowly followed, leading the mare towards the glimmering light which Heathfield had pointed out. My charge stepped out well, and I didn't think that there was anything wrong, though glad, of course, to have a professional opinion.

A man was hanging about the entrance to the public-house, and with his assistance the mare was bestowed in a kind of shed, half cow-house, half stable; and as the inside of the establishment did not look by any means inviting, I lit a cigar and lounged about outside, awaiting the advent of Smithers.

He didn't arrive; and in the course of wandering to and fro I found myself against a window. Restlessly I was just moving away when a voice inside the room repeated the name of *Blankney*. I started, and turning round, looked in.

It was a small apartment, with a sanded floor, and two persons were seated on chairs before the fire conversing earnestly. One of them was a middle-aged man, clad in a brown great-coat with a profusion of fur-collar and cuffs which it would scarcely be libel to term "mangy." He was the

owner of an unwholesome-looking face, decorated as to the chin with a straggling crop of bristles which he would have probably termed an imperial.

"Wust year I ever 'ad!" he exclaimed (and a broken pane in the window enabled me to hear distinctly), "The Two Thousand 'orse didn't run; got in deep over the Derby; Hascot was hawful; and though I had a moral for the Leger, it went down."

His own morals, judging from his appearance and conversation, appeared to have followed the example of that for the Leger.

"I can't follow your plans about this race down here, though," said his companion, a younger man, who seemed to hold the first speaker in great awe despite his confessions of failure. "Don't you say that this young Blankney's horse can't get the distance?"

"I do. He never was much good, I 'ear; never won nothing, though he's run in two or three hurdle-races; and since Phil Kelly's been preparing of 'im for this race he's near about broke down. His legs swell up like bolsters after his gallops; and he can't get three miles at all, I don't believe, without he's pulled up and let lean agin something on the journey to rest hisself."

"And yet you're backing him?"



"And yet I'm backing of him."

"This young Peyton's mare can't be worse?" said the younger man, interrogatively.

"That mare, it's my belief, would be fancied for the Grand National if she was entered, and some of the swells saw 'er. She's a real good 'un!" replied the man with the collar.

"I see. You've got at her jockey. You're an artful one, you are."

As the jockey to whom they alluded, I was naturally much interested.

"No, I ain't done that, neither. He's a gentleman, and it's no use talkin' to such as 'im. They ain't got the sense to take up a good thing when they see it—though, for the matter o' that, most of the perffessionals is as bad as the gentlemen. All's fair in love and war," says I; "and this 'ere's war."

"Does Blankney know how bad his horse is?"

"No, bless yer! That ain't Phil Kelly's game." (Kelly was, I knew, the man who had charge of my opponent's horse.)

"Well, then, just explain, will you; for *I* can't see."

From the recesses of his garment the elder man pulled out a short stick about fifteen inches in length, at the end of which was a loop of string;

and from another pocket he produced a small paper parcel.

“ D’yer know what that is ? That’s a ‘ twitch.’ D’yer know what that is ? That’s medicine. I love this ’ere young feller’s mare so much I’m a-goin’ to give it some nicey med’cine myself ; and this is the right stuff. I’ve been up to the ’ouse to-day, and can find my way into the stable to-night when it’s all quiet. Just slip this loop over ’er lip, and she’ll open ’er mouth. Down goes the pill, and as it goes down the money goes into my pocket. Them officer fellers and their friends have been backing Blankney’s ’orse ; but Phil Kelly will take care that they hear at the last moment that he’s no good. Then they’ll rush to lay odds on the mare—and the mare won’t win.”

They laughed, and nudged each other in the side, and I felt a mighty temptation to rush into the room and nudge their heads with my fist. Little Lady’s delicate lips, which Nelly had so often petted, to be desecrated by the touch of such villains as these !

While struggling to restrain myself a hand was laid on my shoulders, and, turning round, I saw Smithers. We proceeded to the stable ; and I hastily recounted to him what had happened, and what I had heard, as he examined the mare by the



aid of a bull's-eye lantern. He passed his hand very carefully over her, whilst I looked on with anxious eyes.

"She's knocked a bit of skin off here, you see." He pointed to a place a little below her knee, and drawing a small box from his pocket, anointed the leg. "But she's all right. All right, ain't you, old lady?" he said, patting her; and his cheerful tone convinced me that he was satisfied. "We'll lead her home. I'll go with you, sir; and it's easy to take means to prevent any games to-night."

When we reached home the doctor was there, and pronounced that, with the exception of a sprained ankle, Nelly had sustained no injury.

Rejoicing exceedingly, we proceeded to the stable; Heathfield, who heard my story, and who was delighted at the prospect of some fun, asking permission to accompany us.

"Collars" had doubtless surveyed the premises carefully, for he arrived about eleven o'clock, and clambered quietly and skilfully into the hay-loft above the stable, after convincing himself that all was quiet inside. He opened the trap-door, and down came a foot and leg, feeling about to find a resting-place on the partition which divided Little Lady's loose box from the other stalls. Bertie and I took hold of the leg, and assisted him down, to

his intense astonishment ; while Heathfield and a groom gave chase to, and ultimately captured his friend, the watcher on the threshold.

\* \* \* \* \*

“ If I’m well enough to do *anything* I’m well enough to lie on the sofa ; and there’s really *no* difference between a sofa and an easy-chair—if my foot is resting—and I’m sure the carriage is *easier* than *any* chair ; and it can’t matter about my foot being an inch or two higher or lower—and as for shaking, that’s all nonsense. It’s very unkind *indeed* of you not to want to take me ; and if you won’t, directly you’ve gone I’ll get up, and walk about, *and stamp !* ”

Thus Nelly, in answer to advice that she should remain at home. How it ended may easily be guessed ; and though we tried to be dignified, as we drove along, to punish her for her wilfulness, her pathetic little expressions of sorrow that she should “ fall down, and hurt herself, and be such a trouble to everybody,” and child-like assurances that she would “ not do it again,” soon made us smile, and forget our half-pretended displeasure. So with the aunt to take care of her, in case Bertie and I were insufficient, we reached the course.

The first three races were run and then the card said :—



3.15 Match, £120 a side, over the Steeple-chase Course, about three miles and a half.

1. Mr Blankney, 14th Dragoons, ch. h. Jibboom, 5 years, 11 st. 7 lb., rose, black and gold cap.
2. Mr Peyton, b. m. Little Lady, 6 years, 11 st., sky-blue, white cap.

Blankney was sitting on the regimental drag, arrayed in immaculate boots and breeches, and, after the necessary weighing ceremony had been gone through he mounted the great Jibboom, which Phil Kelly had been leading about: the latter gentleman had a rather anxious look on his face; but Blankney evidently thought he was on a good one, and nodded confidently to his friends on the drag as he lurched down the course.

Little Lady was brought up to me, Smithers being in close attendance.

"I *shall* be so glad, if you win," Nellie found opportunity to whisper.

"What will you give me?" I greedily inquire.

"*Anything* you ask me," is the reply; and my heart beats high as, having thrown off my light wrapper and mounted, Little Lady bounds down the course, and glides easily over the hurdle in front of the stand.

Bertie and Smithers were waiting at the starting-post; and, having shaken hands with Blankney, to whom Bertie introduced me, I went apart to

exchange the last few sentences with my friends.

Bertie is a trifle pale, but confident ; and Smithers seems to have a large supply of the latter quality. In however high esteem we hold our own opinions, we are glad of professional advice when it comes to the push ; and I seek instructions.

“ No, sir, don't you wait on him. Go away as hard as you can directly the flag drops. I don't like the look of that chestnut's legs—or, rather, I *do* like the look of them for our sakes. Go away as hard as ever you can ; but take it easy at the fences ; and, excuse me, sir, but just let the mare have her head when she jumps, and she'll be all right. People talk about ‘lifting horses at their fences :’ I only knew one man who could do it, and he made mistakes.”

I nod ; smiling as cheerfully as anxiety will permit me. The flag falls, and Little Lady skims over the ground, the heavy chestnut thundering away behind.

Over the first fence—a hedge—and then across a ploughed field ; rather hard going, but not nearly so bad as I expected it would have been : the mare moving beautifully. Just as I reach the second fence a boy rushes across the course, baulking us ; and before I can set her going again Jibboom has



come up level, and is over into the grass beyond a second before us; but I shoot past and again take up the running. Before us are some posts and rails—rather nasty ones; the mare tops them, and the chestnut hits them hard with all four legs. Over more grass; and in front, flanked on either side by a crowd of white faces, is the water-jump. I catch hold of her head and steady her; and then, she rises, flies through the air, and lands lightly on the other side. A few seconds after I hear a heavy splash; but when, after jumping the hurdle into the course, I glance over my shoulder, the chestnut is still pounding away behind. As I skim along past the stand the first time round and the line of carriages opposite, I catch sight of a waving white handkerchief: it is Nellie; and my confused glimpse imperfectly reveals Bertie and Smithers standing on the box of the carriage.

I had seen visions of a finish, in which a certain person clad in a light-blue jacket had shot ahead just in the nick of time, and landed the race by consummate jockeyship after a neck-and-neck struggle for the last quarter of a mile. This did not happen, however, for, as I afterwards learned, the chestnut refused a fence before he had gone very far, and, having at last been got over, came to grief at the

posts and rails the second time round. Little Lady cantered in alone ; Blankney strolling up some time afterwards.

There is no need to make record of Bertie's delight at the success. We dined next day at the mess of the 14th, Blankney and his brethren were excessively friendly, and seemed pleased and satisfied ; as most assuredly were we. Blankney opines that he went rather too fast at the timber ; but a conviction seemed to be gaining ground towards the close of the evening that he had not gone fast enough at any period of the race.

And for Nellie ? She kept her promise, and granted my request ; and very soon after the ankle was well we required the services of other horses—grey ones !



## HUNTING IN THE MIDLANDS

“JEM PIKE has just come round, gentlemen, to say that they will be able to hunt to-day, after all: and as it's about starting time, and you've some distance to go, I will, if you wish, gentlemen, order your horses round.”

The announcement, as it came to us over our breakfast at a hostelry which I will call the Lion, in a market town which I will call Chippington—a highly convenient hunting rendezvous in the Midlands—was not a little welcome. Jem Pike was the huntsman of the pack, and Jem Pike's message was an intimation that the frost of last night had not destroyed our sport for the day. The morning broke in what Jem would call a “plaguey ugly fashion:” from an artistic point of view it had been divine: for hunting purposes it had been execrable. A thin coating of ice on one's bath indoors, a good stiff hoar frost out, crystallized trees, and resonant roads—all this was seasonable, very, and “pretty to look at, too.” But it was “bad for riding:” and we had not come to the Lion at

Chippington in order to contemplate the beauties of nature, but to brace our nerves with the healthy excitement of the chase. Full of misgivings we descended to breakfast, in hunting toggery notwithstanding. As the sun shone out with increased brilliance we began to grow more cheerful. The frost, we said, was nothing, and all trace of it would be gone before noon. The waiter shook his head dubiously, suggested that there was a good billiard-table, and enquired as to the hour at which we would like to dine. But the waiter, as the event proved, was wrong, and we were still in the middle of breakfast when the message of the huntsman of the Chippington pack arrived—exactly what we had each of us said. Of course the frost was nothing: we had known as much; and now the great thing was to get breakfast over, and “then to horse away.”

After all there is nothing for comfort like the old-fashioned hunting hotels, and unfortunately they are decreasing in number every year. Still the Lion at Chippington remains; and I am happy to say that I know of a few more like the Lion. They are recognisable at a glance. You may tell them by the lack of nineteenth century filagree decoration which characterises their exterior, by the cut of the waiters, by the knowing look of the



boots. Snug are their coffee-rooms, luxurious their beds, genial their whole atmosphere. It is just possible that if you were to take your wife to such an establishment as the Lion, she would complain that an aroma of tobacco smoke pervaded the atmosphere. But the hunting hotel is conspicuously a bachelor's house. Its proprietor, or proprietress, does not lay himself or herself out for ladies and ladies' maids. It is their object to make single gentlemen, and gentlemen who enjoy the temporary felicity of singleness, at home. If it is your first visit, you are met in a manner which clearly intimates that you were expected. If you are an old *habitué* you find that all your wants are anticipated, and all your peculiar fancies known. The waiter understands exactly—marvellous is the memory of this race of men—what you like for breakfast: whether you prefer a “wet fish” or a “dry:” and recollects to a nicety your particular idea of a dinner. Under any circumstances a week's hunting is a good and healthy recreation: but it is difficult to enjoy a week's hunting more perfectly than in one of these hostelries, which have not, I rejoice to say, yet been swept away by the advancing tide of modern improvement.

Of whom did our company consist? We were not a party of Meltonian squires, such as it would

have delighted the famous Nimrod to describe. We were neither Osbaldestones nor Sir Harry Goodrickes: neither Myddelton Biddulphs nor Holyoakes. A Warwickshire or an Oxfordshire hunting field differs very materially, so far as regards its *personnel*, from a Leicester or a Northamptonshire gathering. The latter still preserves the memories and the traditions of a past *régime*, when hunting was confined to country gentlemen, farmers, and a few rich strangers: the former is typical of the new order of things under which hunting has ceased to be a class amusement, and has become a generally popular sport. Now it is not too much to claim for hunting at the present day this character. The composition of the little band which on the morning now in question left the Lion Hotel at Chippington, bound for covert, was no unimportant testimony to this fact. We were half a dozen in number, and comprised among ourselves a barrister, a journalist, a doctor, and a couple of Civil servants, who had allowed themselves a week's holiday, and who, being fond of riding, had determined to take it in this way. In an average hunting field of the present day you will discover men of all kinds of professions and occupations—attorneys, auctioneers, butchers, bakers, innkeepers, artists, sailors, authors. There is no town in England



which has not more than one pack of hounds in its immediate vicinity; and you will find that the riders who make up the regular field are inhabitants of the town—men who are at work four or five days in the week at their desk or counter, and who hunt the remaining one or two. There is no greater instrument of social harmony than that of the modern hunting field: and, it may be added, there is no institution which affords a healthier opportunity for the ebullition of what may be called the democratic instincts of human nature. The hunting field is the paradise of equality: and the only title to recognition is achievement. “Rank,” says a modern authority on the sport, “has no privilege; and wealth can afford no protection.” Out of the hunting field there may be a wide gulf which separates peasant from peer, tenant from landlord. But there is no earthly power which can compel the tenant to give way to the landlord, or the peasant to the peer, when the scent is good and hounds are in full cry.

As we get to the bottom of the long and irregularly-paved street which constitutes the main thoroughfare—indeed, I might add, the entire town of Chippington—we fall in with other equestrians bound for Branksome Bushes—the meet fixed for that day—distant not more than two miles

from Chippington itself. There was the chief medical man of the place, mounted on a very clever horse, the head of the Chippington bank, and some half-dozen strangers. As we drew near to "the Bushes" we saw that there had already congregated a very considerable crowd. There were young ladies, some who had come just to see them throw off, and others with an expression in their faces, and a cut about their habits, which looked like business, and which plainly indicated that they intended, if possible, to be in at the death. There were two or three clergymen who had come from adjoining parishes, and one or two country squires. There were some three or four Oxford undergraduates—Chippington is within a very convenient distance of the city of academic towers—who were "staying up" at their respective colleges for the purpose of reading during a portion of the vacation, and who found it necessary to vary the monotony of intense intellectual application by an occasional gallop with the Chippington or Bicester pack. Then, of course, there was the usual contingent of country doctors: usual, I say, for the medical profession gravitates naturally towards equestrianism. If a country doctor rides at all, you may be sure he rides well, and is well mounted, moreover. There was also a very bois-



terous and hard-riding maltster, who had acquired a considerable reputation in the district: a fair sprinkling of snobs; one or two grooms and stable cads. There was also an illustrious novelist of the day, the guest of Sir Cloudesley Spanker, Bart., and Sir Cloudesley Spanker, Bart., himself.

We had drawn Branksome Bushes and the result was a blank. Local sportsmen commence to be prolific of suggestions. There was Henham Gorse, for instance, and two gentlemen asseverated most positively, upon intelligence which was indisputably true, that there was a fox in that quarter. Another noble sportsman, who prided himself especially on his local knowledge, pressed upon Jem Pike the necessity of turning his attention next to the Enderby Woods, to all of which admonitions, however, Mr Pike resolutely turned a deaf ear. These are among the difficulties which the huntsman of a subscription pack has to encounter or withstand. Every Nimrod who pays his sovereign or so a year to the support of the hounds considers he has a right to a voice in their management. Marvellous is the sensitiveness of the amateur sportsman. It is a well-established fact, that you cannot more grievously wound or insult the feelings of the gentleman who prides himself upon his acquaintance with horses than by impugning the accuracy of his

judgment in any point of equine detail. Hint to your friend, who is possessed with the idea that he is an authority upon the manners and customs of foxes in general, and upon those of any one neighbourhood in particular, that there exists a chance of his fallibility, and he will resent the insinuation as a mortal slight. Jem Pike had his duty to do to the pack and to his employers, and he steadfastly refused to be guided or misguided by amateur advice. So, at Jem's sweet will, we jogged on from Branksome Bushes to Jarvis Spinney, and at Jarvis Spinney the object of our quest was obtained.

'Tis a pretty sight, the find and the throw off. You see a patch of gorse literally alive with the hounds, their sterns flourishing above its surface. Something has excited them, and there "the beauties" go, leaping over each other's backs. Then issues a shrill kind of whimper: in a moment one hound challenges, and next another. Then from the huntsman comes a mighty cheer that is heard to the echo. "He's gone," say half a score of voices. Hats are pressed on, cigars thrown away, reins gathered well up, and lo and behold they are off. A very fair field we were on the particular morning to which I here allude. The rector, I noticed, who had merely come to the meet, was well up with the first of us. Notwithstanding remonstrances addressed



by timid papas and well-drilled grooms in attendance, Alice and Clara Vernon put their horses at the first fence, and that surmounted had fairly crossed the Rubicon. Nay, the contagion of the enthusiasm spread, as is always the case on such occasions, for their revered parents themselves were unable to resist the attraction. Sir Cloudesley Spanker asserted his position in the first rank, as did also the distinguished novelist, his guest.

It has been remarked that all runs with fox-hounds are alike on paper and different in reality. We were fortunate enough to have one that was certainly above the average with the Chippington hounds. Our fox chose an excellent line of country, and all our party from the Lion enjoyed the distinction of being in at the death. Mishaps there were, for all the bad jumpers came signally to grief. Old Sir Cloudesley related with much grim humour the melancholy aspect that two dismounted strangers presented who had taken up their lodging in a ditch. The two Miss Vernons acquitted themselves admirably; so did the rector, and I am disposed to think that the company both of the ladies and the farmers vastly improved our hunting field. It is quite certain that clergymen, more than any other race of men, require active change, and they need what they can get nowhere

better than in a hunting field. Nor in the modern hunting field is there anything which either ladies or clergymen need fear to face. The strong words and the strange oaths, the rough language—in fine, what has been called “the roaring lion element,” these are accessories of the chase which have long since become things of the past. And the consummation is a natural consequence of the catholicity which hunting has acquired. There are no abuses like class abuses. Once admit the free light of publicity, and they vanish.

There are hunting farmers and hunting parsons, clergymen who make the chase the business of their lives, and those who get a day with the hounds as an agreeable relief to their professional toils. There is not much to be said in favour of the former order, which has, by the way, nearly become extinct. It survives in Wales and in North Devon yet, and curious are the authentic stories which might be narrated about these enthusiastic heroes of top-boots and spur. There is a little village in North Devon where, till within a very few years, the meet of the stag-hounds used to be given out from the reading desk every Sunday after the first lesson. Years ago, when one who is now a veteran amongst the fox-hunting clerics of that neighbourhood first entered upon his new duties, he was seized with a desire to



reform the ways of the natives and the practices of the priests. Installed in his new living, he determined to forswear hounds and hunting entirely. He even carried his orthodoxy to such a point as to institute daily services, which at first, however, were very well attended. Gradually his congregation fell off, much to the grief of the enthusiastic pastor. One day, observing his churchwardens lingering in the aisle after the service had been concluded, he went up and asked them whether they could at all inform him of the origin of the declension. "Well, sir," said one of the worthies thus addressed, "we were a-going to speak to you about the very same thing. You see, sir, the parson of this parish do always keep hounds. Mr Froude, he kept fox-hounds, Mr Bellew he kept harriers, and least ways we always expect the parson of this parish to keep *a small cry of summut*." Whereupon the rector expressed his entire willingness to contribute a sum to the support of "a small cry" of harriers, provided his congregation found the remainder. The experiment was tried and was completely successful, nor after that day had the new rector occasion to complain of a deficiency in his congregation.

Tories of the old school, for instance Sir Cloudesley Spanker, who has acquitted himself so gallantly to-day, would no doubt affirm that fox-hunting has

been fatally injured as a sport by railways. The truth of the proposition is extremely questionable, and it may be dismissed in almost the same breath as the sinister predictions which are never verified of certain naval and military officers on the subject of the inevitable destiny of their respective services. Railways have no doubt disturbed the domestic tranquillity of the fox family, and have compelled its various members to forsake in some instances the ancient Lares and Penates. But the havoc which the science of man has wrought, the skill of man has obviated. Foxes are quite as dear to humanity as they can be to themselves; and in proportion as the natural dwellings of foxes have been destroyed artificial homes have been provided for them. Moreover, railways have had the effect of bringing men together, and of establishing all over the country new fox-hunting centres. Hunting wants money, and railways have brought men with money to the spots at which they were needed. They have, so to speak, placed the hunting field at the very doors of the dwellers in town. In London a man may breakfast at home, have four or five hours' hunting fifty miles away from the metropolitan chimney-pots, and find himself seated at his domestic mahogany for a seven o'clock dinner. Nor is it necessary for the inhabitant of London to go



such a distance to secure an excellent day's hunting. To say nothing of her Majesty's staghounds, there are first-rate packs in Surrey, Essex, and Kent, all within a railway journey of an hour. Here again the inveterate *laudator temporis acti* will declare he discerns greater ground for dissatisfaction than congratulation. He will tell you that in consequence of those confounded steam-engines the field gets flooded by cockneys who can't ride, who mob the covert, and effectually prevent the fox from breaking. Of course it is indisputable that railways have familiarised men who never hunted previously with horses and with hounds, and that persons now venture upon the chase whose forefathers may have scarcely known how to distinguish between a dog and a horse. Very likely, moreover, it would be much better for fox-hunting if a fair proportion of these new-comers had never presented themselves in this their new capacity. At the same time with the quantity of the horsemen there has been some improvement also in the quality of the horsemanship. Leech's typical cockney Nimrod may not have yet become extinct, but he is a much rarer specimen of sporting humanity than was formerly the case.

It is a great thing for all Englishmen that hunting should have received this new development

among us, and for the simple reason that salutary as is the discipline of all field sports, that of hunting is so in the most eminent degree. "Ride straight to hounds and talk as little as possible," was the advice given by a veteran to a youngster who was discussing the secret mode in which popularity was to be secured ; and the sententious maxim contains a great many grains of truth. Englishmen admire performance, and without it they despise words. Performance is the only thing which in the hunting field meets with recognition or sufferance, and the braggart is most inevitably brought to his proper level in the course of a burst of forty minutes across a good country. Again, the hunting field is the most admirably contrived species of discipline for the temper. Displays of irritation or annoyance are promptly and effectively rebuked ; and the man who cannot bear with fitting humility the reprimand, when it is merited, of the master or huntsman, will not have long to wait for the demonstrative disapproval of his compeers.

Hunting has been classed amongst those sports—*detestata matribus*—by reason of the intrinsic risk which it involves. Is it in any degree more dangerous than cricket or football, shooting or Alpine climbing ? In Great Britain and Ireland there are



at present exactly two hundred and twenty packs of hounds. Of these some hunt as often as five days a week, others not more frequently than two. The average may probably be fixed at the figure three. Roughly the hunting season lasts twenty-five weeks, while it may be computed that at least ninety horsemen go out with each pack. We thus have one million four hundred and fifty-eight thousand as the total of the occasions on which horse and rider feel the perils of the chase. "If," said Anthony Trollope, in the course of some admirable remarks on the subject, "we say that a bone is broken annually in each hunt, and a man killed once in two years in all the hunts together, we think that we exceed the average of casualties. At present there is a spirit abroad which is desirous of maintaining the manly excitement of enterprise in which some peril is to be encountered, but which demands at the same time that it should be done without any risk of injurious circumstances. Let us have the excitement and pleasure of danger, but for God's sake no danger itself. This at any rate is unreasonable."

These observations have somewhat diverted me from the thread of the original narrative. Should, however, the reader desire more precise information as to the particular line of country taken up by the

fox on that eventful day with the Chippington hounds, will he not find it written for him in his favourite sporting paper ?

So we met, so we hunted, and so we rode home and dined ; and if any person who is not entirely a stranger to horses wishes to enjoy a few days' active recreation and healthy holidays, he cannot, I would submit, for the reasons which I have above attempted to enumerate, do better than go down to the Lion at Chippington, and get a few days with the Chippington hounds.



## A MILITARY STEEPLE-CHASE

WE were quartered in a very sporting part of the country, where the hunting season was always wound up by a couple of days' steeple-chasing. The regiment stationed here had usually given a cup for a military steeple-chase, and when we determined to give one for an open military handicap chase, the excitement was very great as to our chances of winning the cup we had given. As there were some very good horses and riders in the regiment, it appeared a fair one, eight nominations having been taken by us. There were also about the same number taken by regiments in the district. Our Major, who was a first-rate horseman, entered his well-known horse Jerry; I and others nominated one each, but one sub., a very celebrated character amongst us, took two. This man's father had made a very large fortune by nursery gardens, and put his son into the army, where, of course, he was instantly dubbed "The Gardener." He was by no means a bad sort of fellow, but he never could ride. The riding-master almost cried as he said he

never could make "The Gardener" even look like riding; not that he was destitute of pluck, but he was utterly unable to stick on the horse. He had a large stud of hunters, but when out he almost invariably tumbled off at each fence.

Amongst those who nominated horses was the celebrated Captain Lane, of the Hussars, who was said to be so good a jockey that the professionals grumbled greatly at having to give him amateurs' allowance. No one was better at imperceptibly boring a competitor out of the course; and at causing false starts and balking at fences he was without a rival. The way he would seem to be hard on his horse with his whip, when only striking his own leg, was quite a master-piece. Report declared that he trained all his own horses to these dodges, and I believe it was quite true, as his were quite quiet and cool under the performances when the rest were almost fretted out of their lives.

When the handicap came out I found, to my great disgust, that such a crusher had been put on my horse that I at once put the pen through his name—not caring to run him on the off-chance of his standing up and the rest coming to grief, or with the probability, anyhow, of a punishing finish. However, the next night after mess, the Major called me up to him in the ante-room, and said: "I hear you



have scratched your horse, and quite right, too. I have accepted, and if you like to have the mount, you are quite welcome." Of course, I was greatly delighted, but told him that I had never ridden in steeple-chase before. "But I have," growled the Major, "and am not going to waste over this tin-pot," as he irreverently called the cup, "so I can show you the ropes. Come to my quarters after breakfast to-morrow, and we will try the horse."

The next day I went there, and found the Major mounted, awaiting me, and Jerry—a very fine brown horse, with black points. I soon discovered that he had one decided peculiarity—viz., at his first fence, and sometimes the second, instead of going up and taking it straight, he would whip round suddenly and refuse. On thinking what could be the cause of this trick, I came to the conclusion that his mouth must have been severely punished by the curb when he was first taught jumping; and on telling the Major my idea, he allowed me to ride him as I pleased, so instead of an ordinary double bridle, I put one with a couple of snaffles in his mouth, and very soon found that this had the desired effect. Indeed, after a few days, he took his first fence all right, unless flurried, and before the day seemed quite trustworthy.

When we got back after our first day's ride, the Major told me, rather to my amusement, that I must go into training as well as the horse,—adding, what was quite true, that he had seen more amateur races lost through the rider being beat before the horse than by any other means; so when I had given Jerry his gallops in the morning, I had to start a mile run in the afternoon in flannels or sweaters.

The course was entirely a natural one, about three miles and a half round, and only two ugly places in it, chiefly grass, with one piece of light plough and some seeds. The first two fences were wattles on a bank, with a small ditch, then an ordinary quickset hedge, followed by an old and stiff bullfinch. After this a post and rails, a bank with a double ditch, and merely ordinary fences till we came to a descent of about a quarter of a mile, with a stream about twelve feet wide, and a bank on the taking-off side. Next came some grass meadows, with a very nasty trappy ditch, not more than four feet wide, but with not the slightest bank or anything of the kind on either side,—just the thing for a careless or tired horse to gallop into. The last fence, which was the worst of all, was, I fancy, the boundary of some estate or parish, and consisted of a high bank, with a good ditch on each



side—on the top a young, quick-set hedge, and, to prevent horses or cattle injuring it, two wattle fences, one on each side, slanting outwards. After this, there was a slight ascent of about 300 yards; then there was dead level of about a quarter of a mile up to the winning-post.

On the evening before the chase, we had a grand guest night, to which, of course, all the officers of other regiments who had entered horses were invited. We youngsters were anxious to see Captain Lane, of whom we had heard so much.

On his arrival, after the usual salutations, he enquired of the Major whether he was going to ride, and, on receiving a negative, asked who was; and on having the intending jockeys pointed out to him, just favoured us with a kind of contemptuous glance, never taking any further notice of us.

The celebrated Captain was a slight man, about five feet eight inches, with not a particularly pleasant look about his eyes, and looking far more the jock than the soldier. The steeple-chases were fixed for the next day at 2.30 P.M., but, as a matter of fact, all the riders were on the ground long before that for the purpose of examining the ground and the fences.

The Major came to see me duly weighed out, and

gave me instructions as to riding—that I was not on any account to race with everyone who came alongside me, nor to make the running at first, unless the pace was very slow and muddling, of which there was little danger, for quite half the jocks, he said, would go off as if they were in for a five furlong spin, and not for a four mile steeple-chase.

I was to lie behind, though handy, until we came to the descent to the stream and then make the pace down and home as hot as I could,—to find out the “dicky forelegs,” he said, knowing that Jerry’s were like steel.

We all got down to the post pretty punctually, and, of course, in a race of this description, the starter had no difficulty in dropping his flag at the first attempt.

I gave Jerry his head, and to my joy he took the first fence as straight and quietly as possible, so taking a pull at him, I was at once passed by some half dozen men (the gallant “Gardener” amongst them) going as hard as they could tear. It was lucky for them that the fences were light and old, as most of the horses rushed through them. When they got to the bullfinch, one horse refused, and another attempting to, slipped up and lay in a very awkward looking lump, jock and all close under it. The rest having been a little



steadied took it fairly enough. Jerry jumped it as coolly as possible, like the regular old stager that he was, in spite of Captain Lane coming up at the time with a great rush, evidently hoping to make him refuse.

When we landed on the other side a ludicrous spectacle presented itself, the gallant "Gardener" being right on his horse's neck, making frantic attempts to get back into his saddle, which were quite unsuccessful, and the horse coming to the next fence, a post and rail, quietly took it standing, then putting down his head slipped his rider off and galloped on without him.

The field now began to come back to us very quickly, and soon the leading lot were Vincent of ours, a splendid rider, as I thought, and as it turned out, my most dangerous opponent, with a Carabinier in close attendance; then myself, with Captain Lane waiting on me, and watching the pair of us most attentively, so that it seemed almost impossible that I should have any chance of slipping him. However, an opportunity did present itself at length, which I took advantage of—hearing a horse coming up a tremendous "rattle" on my right.

I looked round to see who and what it was. Lane, noticing what I was doing, looked round too. Seeing this I loosed Jerry's head, and

giving him at the same time a slight touch with the spur, he shot out completely—slipping the Captain, passing the Carabinier, and getting head and head with Vincent. Down the hill we went as hard as we could, clearing the water side by side. At the grip in the fields beyond I gained slightly by not taking a steadier at Jerry, trusting to his eyesight and cleverness to avoid grief.

As we got to the best fence, the ugly boundary one, I did take a pull, the jump looking as nasty a one as could well be picked out ; however, the old horse did it safely, and Vincent and myself landed side by side in the winning field, amidst most tremendous shouting and cheering from our men, who were standing as thick as thick could be on each side of the course.

The excitement was terrific as we came up, apparently tied together, but giving Jerry a couple of sharp cuts with the whip, I found my leg gradually passing Vincent's, until at length I was nearly opposite his horse's head, and thus we passed the winning post, to my great relief. I did not know how much my opponent's horse had left in him, and expected him to come up with a rush at the last, in which case I doubted whether I should be able to get anything more out of Jerry in time, as



he was rather a lazy horse, though possessing enormous "bottom."

I had scarcely pulled up and turned round to go to the scales, before I met the Major, who told me I was "not to make a fool of myself and dismount," before the clerk of the scales told me to, and then he pitched into me for riding at the "Grip," as I did, apprising me at the same time that he did not care how I risked my neck, but "I might have hurt the horse," adding, after a pause, and with a grunt, "but you won."

The delight of our men was so great at two of their officers being first and second, that it was all that Vincent and myself could do to avoid being carried about on their shoulders after we had weighed in.

The gallant captain was most awfully disgusted at being beaten by "a couple of boys," and went off immediately—resisting all invitations to stop and dine at mess. I subsequently found out that when I slipped him (at which he was particularly angry) he gave his horse a sharp cut with his whip, which seemed quite to upset it.

On coming down to the water the horse jumped short—dropping his hind legs in, and at the "Grip," nearly got in, only saving itself by bucking over it, and at the big boundary absolutely came down on

landing, though his rider managed to keep his seat.

As for myself, I need not say how delighted I was at winning my first steeplechase, though the Major did tell me that a monkey would have ridden as well, and helped the horse as much as I did. "*But I won*" was always my reply.



## HOW I WON MY HANDICAP

TOLD BY THE WINNER

It was a foot-racing handicap, run just after Christmas at Sheffield, and how I came to win happened in this wise. At eighteen I found myself still living, say, at Stockton-on-Tees, on the borders of Yorkshire, the town of my birth. My trade was that of a wood-turner, and with but half my time served. "Old Tubby" found me an unwilling apprentice, who had not the least inclination for work. Stockton, though only a little place, is noted for sporting and games of all sorts—but particularly for cricket. I played, of course, but they didn't "reckon" much of me, except for fielding. "Sikey," who was a moulder, and I, kept ferrets and dogs, too, and on Sundays we used to go up the "Teeside" after rabbits, or rats, or anything we could get. Sometimes we stripped and had a "duck," and then we ran on the bank barefoot. I could give him half a score yards start in a field's length, and win easily; but often I didn't try to get up till close

upon the hedge we had agreed should be the winning-post. My father had been coachman to a sporting gent who kept race-horses, and the old man used to talk for everlasting about the "Chifney rush." When first Sikey and I ran I tried to beat him, so he made me give a start. Then I thought of the 'cute old jockey, and I used to try and get up and win in the last yard or so.

One day Locker, who had formerly kept a running ground at Staleybridge, met me, and asked if I'd go out with him next Saturday and have a spin. I told him I "didn't mind;" so we went up the turnpike till a straight level bit was found, and he stepped 100 yards, leaving me at the start, saying, "Come away as hard as thou can, whenever thou art ready." He had his hands in his topcoat pocket all the while, and when I finished, we walked on a bit, neither speaking for a quarter of a mile further, when he looked at his watch and said it was "getting dinner-time." Soon after he looked again, and then "took stock o' me from head to foot," and as we passed the ground I had run over, he asked, "Canst run another hundred?" I told him I could; but this time he pulled off his own coat, and said, "We'll go together." He was quickest off, but I could have passed him any time, just as I used to pass Sikey. When we got nearly to the finish I



“put it on” and just got home first. He seemed pleased and told me not to say a word to anybody, but come down and meet him again. I didn’t know what he was about at all, but I said “All right,” and next Saturday went to the same place. Locker was there, and two other coves with him, as I hadn’t seen before. One was a tall thin un he called “Lanky,” and the other was little and wiry, and rather pock-pitted. He said, “Let’s all four run for a ‘bob’ a-piece, and you three give me two yards start?” But they wouldn’t; so he said, I should run the “long un” for a crown. That was soon settled, and just before we started, Locker whispered to me, “Beat him, lad, if thou canst; I want him licked, he is such a bragger. We’ll share t’ crown if thou wins.” The little un set us off, and Locker was judge. Well, we got away together, and I headed him in by five yards easy. Locker fairly danced, he was so pleased; and though Lanky grumbled a bit at first to part with his “crown,” he was soon all right. We went to Locker’s to dinner, and talked about “sprinting,” as they called it, all the afternoon. I told ’em I’d never run at all before except for fun, and they seemed “fairly staggered.” They asked if I would run a match for £5 next week, and I told ’em I didn’t mind. Locker said I was a “good un,” and I might “win

£100 if I'd nobbut stick tu him." Well, we agreed that I was to do just as he directed, and receive a sovereign for myself if I won by just a foot, and two pound if I ran a dead heat, letting the "novice" who was to be my opponent catch me at the finish. I never "split" to anybody except Sikey, and he went to see the race. Over a hundred people were there, and off we started. Everybody thought I was winning, but I "shammed tired," and he beat me about three inches, the judge said. Locker swore it was a dead heat, and as he had laid 2 to 1 on me I thought he'd lost a lot of money. As we went home, he said, "There's £2 for thee, lad; thou did it wonderful well; I shall match thee again next Saturday for £20: we might as well have it as anybody else." Well, during the week I was out with him every night, and he said, "Stick to me, and we'll mak these coves sit up. Thou'rt a thunderin' good un, and we'll gan to Sheffield together in less nor six months if thou can keep thyself to thyself." Of course I was pleased, and I bought a new pair of running-shoes with spikes in. He showed me *The Sporting Life* next week, with a challenge in that "'Locker's lad,' not satisfied with his late defeat, will take a yard in a 100 from the 'Stockton Novice,' for £25 or £50 a-side. A deposit to the editor and articles sent to Mr Locker's running-



grounds, Stockton, will meet with immediate attention." I was quite struck, and said I wondered what "Old Tubby" would think if he knew. Locker said, "Go ask him for thy indentures, and if he won't give 'em up, ask him what he'll tak for 'em." So I did, and if I hadn't been in such a hurry, he'd have thrown 'em at me, and said he was glad to get rid of an idle rascal. As it was, I told him I'd something else to do, and he demanded £3 for my release. Locker gave me the money next day, and I soon put the indentures in the fire; thanking my stars for the escape. After this I lived at Locker's altogether, and in two or three days an answer came from the "Novice," to say he'd give 2 yards start in 150. Well, that didn't seem to suit Locker, so he replied, through the paper again, that "Sooner than not run again, his lad should run the 'Novice' 100 yards level at Kenham grounds for £25 a side. To run in three weeks." Articles came and were signed on these terms. Then he said, "Thou needn't train at all, though I want thee to win this time by nearly a yard; just stay a bit longer than before, and don't let him quite catch thee. Make a good race of it, but be sure and win." We often went to the old spot on the turnpike, and once he took a tape and measured the ground. He had stepped it within a yard and a half. At last

he showed me his watch that he had won in a handicap. There was a long hand which jumped four times in a second, and he could start it or stop it by pressing a spring whenever he liked. Then I held it while he ran, and found he was just 11 sec. doing his 100 yards. I tried, and was "ten and a beat," which he told me was reckoned first-rate time. While I stopped with him I found out all about "sprints" and "quarters," and how long a man ought to be running different distances. I asked, too, about the last race; why he could afford to give me £2 when I lost? He said the two "fivers" he had bet were with "pals," and he lost nothing but my stake. Then he told me about the little man and Lanky, whom I had met with him and run against. The "long 'un," he said, was a very good "trial horse," who could keep his tongue in his head, and would "stand in" if I won anything. The little un had been on business in the north, and came round to see him (Locker). It was all chance his being there, but I should see him again, farther south, where he kept a running ground. Well, the day for our race came at last, and we went to Kenham. I was wrapped in a blanket after we stripped, and a stout man, called Woldham, who stood referee, whispered something to Locker, who replied that I was fit and sure to win. They laid 5 to 4 against



me at first, but presently I heard evens offered, and then £22 to £20 on me, and that was as far as Locker's friends would go. We had a lot of "fiddling," as they call it, at the mark, but presently we jumped away, I with an advantage of about a yard. I had made the gap quite four yards at half the distance, and then "died away" till near the post, where, as the *Chronicle* next Monday said, I "struggled manfully, and took the tape first by half a yard; time,  $10\frac{2}{3}$  sec." Hadn't we a jaw as we went back! Locker said I was a "wonderful clever lad," and that Woldham had told him I should be "heard of again." We both laughed, and I got £5 for winning. With this I bought a new rig out, and everybody at Stockton that knew me said I was "ruined for life." They all wanted to know where the togs came from, however, but I kept that to myself.

It was now September, and Locker said, "I'll enter thee for a handicap." So he did, and shortly afterwards we went to Kenham again, where, by his directions, I was beat for my heat, with 5 yards start in 120. About a week later, we had a long talk, and then he said, "Dost know what I've been doing, lad?" I told him I thought he meant to get me a good start and try if I could win. "Thou'rt partly right," he said, "but I've been running thee 100 yards, and

letting thee lose in t' last few strides. This makes 'em think thou can't stay. I know thou'rt as good at 150 as 100, so I shall train thee and run thee at Sheffield this Christmas. If thou can win there, we can earn £1000 between us, and if thou can only run into a place, we shall make £50 or £100 apiece; but mind, we shall let t' eat out o' t' bag: thou'll never get on a mark again after trying once." Presently, Merling and Stemmerson advertised a £40 handicap at Kenham, and I entered; then came the big Sheffielder of £80, and down went my name for that too. I lived very regular all this time, went to bed early, and practised the distance every day, till Locker said I was a "level time" man, and if I didn't win it would be a "fluke." At last the start appeared: I got in at 7 yards in the 130 at Newcastle, and my mark was 67 in 210 yards at Ryde Park. Locker was delighted: "Thou can win 'em both in a walk, lad," he said, again and again. Then the betting quotations were sent up week after week, and I was at 50 to 1 long enough at Sheffield. There wasn't much doing on the 130 yards race, so Locker said I might go there on the Saturday and lose my first heat. He didn't lay out a penny any way till we went into Alf Wilner's, the Punch Bowl, on Sunday night. Somebody presently asked my price, and, to my surprise, up



got the little pock-marked man I had met, and said he was commissioned to take 60 to 1 to £5, just for a "fancy" bet. A big Sheffielder opened his book and said he might as well have the "fiver" as not, and there I was backed to win £300 already. Locker and I went away to bed about nine o'clock, and next morning in came the little 'un at six to tell us he'd ta'en five fifties more, then five forties, ten thirties, and ten twenties, and I was now in the market at 12 to 1 taken and offered. My heat was the sixth, and there were five starters marked. First came "old Scratch" of Pendleton at 59 yards, then Roundtree of Huddersfield at 62, and myself at 67; the other didn't turn up. The pistol was fired and away we went, and, as Locker had started me hundreds of times, so that I could "get off the mark" well, I don't think I lost any ground. At about half way I could hear somebody on my left, but I daren't look round. Afterwards I found "Scratch" had tried to "cut me down," but it was all no use, and I took away the tape by two yards good. Everybody cheered, for betting on the heat had been 7 to 4 on "Scratch" and 3 to 2 against me. At the close of the day there were ten runners left in for the final heat, and "my price" was 4 to 1, Roper of Staleybridge being the favourite at 6 to 4 against him. Locker said he had laid off

£250 at 5 to 1 directly after the heat, so that our party stood to win £1000 exactly, of which I was to have £200 if I "landed." We were together till bedtime, and slept in a double room. At seven next morning we took a stroll, and just as we got to Alf's to breakfast somebody put a bit of paper into my hand and then shot away. I slipped it in my pocket, and said "nowt" till after breakfast, when I read on it, "£150 for thyself before the start if thou'll run fourth." I asked Locker what it meant, and he laughed, and said they wanted me to "rope." When we went out again the little fellow pulled out a roll of notes and showed 'em to me; but I meant to win if possible, so I shook my head. As the morning passed I "sort of funkyed" the race, but then I thought, "I were a made man if I copped." So I just said to mysel', "Bill, lad, haul in the slack," and off we went to the grounds. I never felt fitter either before or since; and after Roper got off badly and was beat a short foot, I was sure the final heat was my own. My second heat was an easy win, and "Lord, how the Sheffielders did shout" when I ran in three yards ahead without being fully extended! They laid 7 to 4 on me for the deciding race, which was the hardest of the lot. Hooper of Stanningly went from the same mark; we afterwards found out they'd played a similar



game with him. They'd "pulled" him for two handicaps, and let him lose all his matches, and now he had been backed to win £600. He beat me at starting, and before we got half way they cried "Hooper wins." I was a good yard behind him, but with a hard strain I got level, and we ran shoulder and shoulder till just on the tape, where I threw myself forward, with the old "Chifney rush," and just won by a bare half-yard. Locker fairly hugged me, and, half blind though I was with the tough race, the "tykes" shoulder-heighted and carried me off to the house.

In presents, and with my share, I got £230, and thought I'd put it away in the bank. But that night we all had champagne, and I went to bed quite queer and dizzy-like. Next day was the same, and on Thursday we took train to Manchester, where I was invited to stop a week or two. Locker left me and went home, telling me to take care of myself. I wish I'd gone too, for what with meeting betting-men and playing cards and buying swell clothes, to say nothing of dresses for a fresh sweetheart, I soon got awful "fast." Then we used to sit up at nights playing "seven's the main," and I wasn't lucky or summut; but, however, in six weeks I'd got through half my money. One night we started cutting through the pack, and then played

“Blind Hookey,” and next morning the little pock-pitted man came up and called me a “flat,” and said I’d fair thrown my winnings into the fire. He didn’t know much about what had gone on, and when I told him “I knocked down close on £150,” he said he daren’t send me back to Stockton. Well, I stopped at Manchester altogether; and during the next two or three years I won heaps of races, learned the “rope trick,” and found out whose “stable” every lad trained from. I won hundreds of pounds, which, having all come over the “devil’s back,” went the same way. I’m twenty-three now, but I can’t do “level time” any longer without six weeks’ training, although even yet, at 100 yards, very few lads can “pull off their shirt” every day in the week and lick me. I like the life very well—it’s free and easy; but I wish Locker had ta’en me back and made my matches. He’s clever, he is, and knows when to “let a fellow’s head loose” without halloaing.



## THE FIRST DAY OF THE SEASON, AND ITS RESULTS

“ When at the close of the departing year  
Is heard that joyful sound, the huntsman’s cheer,  
And wily Reynard with the morning air  
Scents from afar the foe, and leaves his lair.”

I QUITE agree with the distinguished foreign nobleman who declared that “ Nothing was too good to go foxing in ;” and with the immortal Jorrocks of Handley Cross fame, I exclaim, “ ’Unting, my beloved readers, is the image of war with only ten per cent. of its dangers.”

Ever since I was an unbreeched urchin, and my only steed a rough Shetland pony, across whose bare back my infantine legs could scarcely stride, I have looked forward to a day’s hunting with the keenest relish. The preliminary sport of cub-hunting—with its early-dawn meets: bad scent, consequent upon fallen leaves and decayed vegetable matter; riotous young hounds, which can scarcely be brought to hunt upon any terms; timid, nervous young foxes, who hardly dare poke their sharp noses out of covert—only serves to give a

greater zest as it were to the opening day, One or two woodland runs, just sufficient to breathe the well-trained hunter or take the exuberant spirits (the accompaniments of high feeding and no work) from the young one, after a stripling Reynard, who as yet has no line of country of his own, and hardly dares to venture far from the place of his birth, ending with a kill just to blood the young hounds, only makes the longing for the first day of the season more intense.

Not one of her Majesty's subjects throughout her vast dominions—so vast indeed are they that, as the song tells us, "the sun never sets on them"—not one, I say, of her Majesty's lieges looked forward more anxiously than I did to the first day of the hunting season of 18—, for why should I be too explicit about dates, or let all the world know that I am so ancient as to remember anything so long buried in the past? I had just returned to old England with a year's leave from my regiment, then in India. I was possessed of capital health and spirits, was only just six-and-twenty years of age, had five hundred pounds at my bankers, and two as good nags in my stable as ever a man laid his leg across. "Hunting for ever!" I cried, as I strolled into Seamemup and Bastemwell's, the unrivalled breechesmakers' estab-



lishment in the Strand, to order a few pair of those most necessary adjuncts to the sporting man's wardrobe previous to leaving town. "Hunting for ever!" and of all the packs in England, commend me to my old acquaintance, those friends of my boyhood, the Easyallshire Muggers. I am not sure but that, strictly speaking, the term "mugger" ought only be applied to those packs of hounds which are used for that peculiar pastime which, to again quote the immortal Jorrocks, "is only fit for cripples, and them as keeps donkeys," viz., harriers.

Be that as it may, the pack I now speak of were, though called muggers, *bond fide* foxhounds, and as such, only used in the "doing to death" of that wily animal.

The country which had as it were given birth to this distinguished pack presented to the hunting man very much the same features as do most parts of England. There were the same number of ditches and dingles to be got over somehow, the same gates which would and would not be opened, the same fences, stiles, and heavers to be cleared, the same woodland parts to be hunted, from which it was next to impossible to get a fox away, and to which every one said he would never come again; but for all that no one ever kept his word, for there were just the very same number of sportsmen to be

seen at the very next meet held in the district ; thus proving that foxhunting, even under difficulties, is still a most fascinating diversion ; and there were the same snug-lying gorse coverts, from which a run was sure to be obtained over a flat well-enclosed country, which gave both man and horse as much as ever their united efforts could accomplish, to be there or thereabouts at the finish. Nor were the meets of the Easyallshire Muggers, advertised in *The Field*, dissimilar in any respect to those of other packs of hounds, for there were an equal number of cross roads, turnpike gates, public houses, gibbets, woods, sign-posts, and milestones, as elsewhere. Well, to enjoy a season's sport with this so distinguished hunt was my intention ; and no sooner had I completed the requisite arrangements with regard to my hunting toggery, which a residence of some half dozen years in India had rendered necessary, than I took up my abode in the little town of Surlyford, at the comfortable hotel rejoicing in the mythological sign of the Silent Woman, a fabulous personage surely, to be classed with Swans with Two Necks, Green Men, and other creatures who never had any existence. The first meet of the Easyallshire Muggers was settled, so said the county paper, to take place at the fourth milestone on the Surlyford road. Thither I re-



paired, fully equipped in all the splendour of a new pink, immaculate cords, brown-tinted tops, my blue birds'-eye scarf, neatly folded and fastened with a pin bearing a most appropriate device, viz., a real fox's tooth. In my impatience to be up and doing on this our opening day, I arrived at the trysting-place, from whence I was to woo my favourite pastime, some half hour or more before the master and his pack were due. I had, therefore, ample leisure to receive the greetings of my numerous old friends and acquaintances, as they came up from all parts, and in all directions, on all sorts and all sizes of nags, and at all kinds of paces, to the place of meeting. First to arrive on that useful steed yclept "Shanks's pony," slouching along, clad in rusty velveteen, baggy brown cord breeches and gaiters, billycock, as he termed his wideawake hat, on head, a stout ashen stick, cut from a neighbouring coppice, in hand, and ten to one a quantity of wires in his pockets, was handsome, dark-eyed, good-for-nothing, scampish, dishonest Gipsy Jim—the sometime gamekeeper, when he could get any to employ him, but oftener the poaching, drinking, thieving vagabond of the neighbourhood. A broad grin of recognition, and a touch of the hat on the part of the Gipsy one, and an exclamation on mine of "Bless me, Jim! not hanged yet?" placed us once again on the old familiar



footing of "I will tell you all I know about foxes" (and who could afford better information than one whose habits and disposition partook more of the vermin than the man?), "providing you give me a shilling to drink your health." Gipsy Jim and I had hardly interchanged these civilities, when, trotting along on a stout, handsome, six-year-old, in capital condition, though, if anything, a little too fat (not a bad fault, however, at the beginning of the season), came farmer Thresher, of Beanstead, a florid, yellow-haired, red-whiskered, jovial, hard-riding, independent agriculturist, who, on the strength of having been at school in years gone by with some of the neighbouring squires, myself amongst the number, called us all freely by our surnames, forgetting to prefix the accustomed Mister, and thus giving great umbrage to some and causing them always to pointedly address him as "Mr Thresher." Our mutual salutations had hardly come to an end when we were joined by half a dozen more sturdy yeomen, able and willing to go, let the pace be ever so severe, and all of them contributing their five pounds yearly to the support of the Easyallshire Muggers, "spite of wheat, sir, at fourteen shillings a bag."

Young Boaster next turns up, a swaggering blade from a neighbouring hunt, who is always abusing



the Easyallshire hounds, and bragging of his own prowess, which consists of riding extraordinary distances to far-off meets, and doing nothing when he gets there, save telling wonderful and fabulous stories of what he had done last time he was out, and what he intended to do then. He is succeeded by Dr Bolus, "the sporting Doctor," as he is called, who must be making a very handsome fortune in his profession, if his knowledge of medicine is anything like his judgment in horseflesh, his skill in the pigskin, or his acquaintance with the line of a fox. After Bolus, on a three-legged screw, a wonder to every one how it is kept at all on its understandings, comes Alocs, the veterinary surgeon, a pleasant-spoken, florid, little old man, skilful in his business, ever agreeing, with his "That I would, sir," and one whom I would much prefer to attend me when sick than many a professor of the healing art among men. The majesty of the law is upheld next by Mr Sheepskin, the attorney, a gentlemanly man, a lightweight, and one who rides, when need be, as hard as if not harder than any one. Nor is the Church absent (for we have not a few clerical subscribers to the Easyallshire Muggers), but is well represented in the person of the Rev. Mr Flatman, a good-looking, well-built, foxy-whiskered divine, whose handling of the ribbons on the coach-box, and seat



on horseback, would entitle him to a deanery at the very least, could the Broad-Church party but come into power. His small country parish, however, does not suffer by the fondness of its rector for the sports of the field; having a hard-working and most exemplary curate, he is still a painstaking and estimable parish priest, and much preferred, I doubt not, by all his parishioners to any more busy and interfering divine of either of the other two schools of divinity. I myself am by no means the sole member of the military profession present, for we are here of all ranks, from the just-joined subaltern to the gallant colonel of the county militia, a stout fine-looking veteran, none of your feather-bed soldiers, and one who, spite of his weight, is an exceedingly difficult man to beat across country. "Mammon," as it is the fashion nowadays to call that useful article, money, is seen approaching in the person of the Surlyford banker, who, wisely flinging business to the winds at least twice in the week, gets astride a good-looking, nearly thoroughbred nag, and finds accepting bullfinches, negotiating ditches, and discounting gates, stiles, &c., a much more healthy and more pleasant, if not more profitable, occupation than everlastingly grubbing after filthy lucre.

The Master now makes his appearance, tall and



upright, knowing thoroughly the duties of his office, and if not quite so bold and determined a rider as in years gone by, still making up for want of nerve in knowledge of the country, and for lack of dash in careful riding and judicious nicking-in. Suffice it to say, that at the finish, his absence is never observed, though how he came to be there is better known to the second-rank horsemen than to the flyers. The huntsman and whip are much the same as those worthies are everywhere; but the hounds, how to describe them I know not.

The Easyallshire Muggers set all rules regarding the make, size, and symmetry of foxhounds at defiance. They show almost better sport, and kill more foxes, than any pack in the kingdom; and yet they are as uneven as a ploughed field, and as many shapes and sizes as a charity school. I can only say, "handsome is as handsome does;" and if my canine friends are not pleasant to the eye of the connoisseur—if they come not up to the standard of Beckford Somerville, and other writers who have described a perfect foxhound, still they work beautifully—which to my mind is far preferable to looking beautiful—and will run and kill foxes with any hounds in England. The huntsman and whip, though not so well mounted (economy is the order of the day with the Easy-

allshire Muggers) as we would wish to see them, yet manage somehow to get across the country, and to be with their hounds; though for the matter of that, such is the sagacity of the Easyallshire pack, they can very frequently do quite as well without the assistance of their ruler and guide as with it. The Easyallshire Hunt, as the name implies, is an easy-going sort of concern, in which every man, gentle and simple, has a finger in the pie; every subscriber imagining that he has a perfect right, on the strength of his subscription, to hunt, whip-in, or otherwise direct the movements of the hounds whenever opportunity occurs. But for-rard! for-rard on! or I shall be at the fourth milestone on the Surlyford road all day, instead of drawing that inviting piece of gorse covert which lies so pleasant and warm, with its southern aspect on yonder bank. A guinea to a gooseberry, a fox lies there!

Joe, the huntsman, now trots along through the somewhat bare and brown pasture fields towards the covert; the pack, eager and keen for the fray, clustering round the heels of his horse. A few moments only elapse, and the sea of gorse is alive with hounds poking here, there, and everywhere, seeking the lair of sly Reynard. Old experience having taught me that Gipsy Jim's knowledge of the fox and his habits (for being half-brother to the



varmint in his nature, how can it fail to be otherwise?) would serve me in good stead, I station myself near to him in order to have a good view of "Mr Reynolds," as Jim calls the cunning animal, when he breaks covert. Nor am I wrong in my conjecture; for after a few pleasant notes from old Bellman, who hits upon the place where Master Fox crossed a ride early this morning, and a "hark to Bellman" from Joe the huntsman, out jumps, almost into Jim's arms, as fine a fox as ever wore a brush. Master Reynard looks somewhat astonished at being brought so suddenly face to face with a two-legged monster, and seems half inclined to turn back again to his hiding-place; but, perhaps judging from Jim's varmint look that no danger might be apprehended from that quarter, and being warned by the deep notes of old Bellman that his late quarters were untenable, he throws back his head as if to sniff the pleasant morning breeze, and giving his brush a gentle wave of defiance, boldly takes to the open, and starts across the field which surrounds the covert at a good rattling pace. Gipsy Jim grins from ear to ear with delight, showing his white regular teeth, at the same time holding up his hand as a warning to me to keep silence for a few seconds, so as not to spoil sport by getting the fox headed back. The moment, however, Master Reynard is

safely through the neighbouring hedge, Jim's tremendous view-halloa makes the whole country ring again. This is the signal for every bumpkin and footman to shout and halloa with might and main, thus making the necessary confusion of the find worse confounded still. "Hold your noisy tongues," shout the Master, huntsman, whip, and all the horsemen; but "Hold your noisy tongues" they cry in vain. "Tallyho! tallyho! tallyho!" yell the footmen, totally regardless of all expostulation. But crafty Jim, knowing the idiosyncrasy of the yokels, has made all safe by his silence, until the red-coated rascal is well away. "Hark! halloa!" "Hark! halloa!" roar the field. "Tootle, tootle!" goes Joe's horn, reëchoed by an asthmatical effort in the same direction, on the part of the worthy master, who blows as if his horn was full of dirt. The hounds, however, are accustomed to the sound, feeble as it is, and all rush to the spot where Master, huntsman, and Gipsy Jim are all cheering them exactly at the place where foxy broke away. What a burst of music now strikes upon the ear, far superior to the delights of any concert it has ever been my lot to be present at, as the hounds acknowledge with joy the rapture they feel at the strong scent left behind by him they had so unceremoniously disturbed from his comfortable lodgings! But the scent is too good for us to



dwell here for description, and away they go at a killing pace, which, if it lasts long enough, will get to the bottom of many a gallant steed there present. And now comes the rush of horsemen amidst the cries of "Hold hard ! don't spoil your sport !" of the master, and the "'Old 'ard !" of the huntsman, who has an eye to tips, and therefore restrains his wrath in some measure. But the Easyallshireans are not to be kept back by any such remonstrances and expostulations as these, and those who mean to be with the hounds throughout the run, hustle along to get a forward place ; whilst the knowing and cunning ones, with the Master at their head, turn short round, and make for a line of gates which lie invitingly open, right in the direction which the fox has taken. I get a good start, and being well mounted, sail away, and am soon alongside of Joe the huntsman, whose horse, though a screw, and not very high in condition, is obliged to go, being compelled thereto by its rider. A stiff-looking fence, which I charge at the same moment as Joe, who takes away at least a perch of fencing, and thus lets many a muff through, lands us into the next field, and affords a fair view of the hounds streaming away a little distance before us. But why should I describe the run ? *The Field*, weekly, gives much more graphic descriptions of such things

that was the name of the irascible little gentleman whose hatred of hunting, hounds, and horses had caused my suffering—until my wounded limb was well again, the worthy old major doing all in his power to make amends for the catastrophe his absurd violence had brought about.

At the expiration of six weeks I was able to move about on crutches; at the termination of twice that period, I was well again, and had, moreover, fallen irretrievably in love with the bright eyes and pretty face of Belinda Pipeclay, one of the major's handsome daughters. Thinking, in my ignorance of the fair sex, that the child of so irascible a papa—having been in her juvenile days well tutored under the Solomonian code of "sparing the rod, and spoiling the child"—must therefore, of necessity, make a submissive and obedient wife, I proposed, was accepted, obtained the major's consent, and became a Benedict.

Dear reader, I am really ashamed to confess the truth: I have been severely henpecked ever since. Whether Belinda possesses the same antipathy to hounds, horses, and hunting men as her progenitor, I cannot possibly tell; for returning to India soon after my marriage, I had no opportunity of there testing her feelings in that respect. Now the increasing number of mouths in our nursery compels



a decreasing ratio of animals in my stable, and I am reduced to one old broken-winded cripple, which I call "the Machiner." He takes Mrs Sabretache and myself to the market town on a Saturday, and mamma, papa, and the little Sabretaches to church on the following day.

## A DAY WITH THE DRAG

BY THE EDITOR

To my mind there are few more pleasant ways of spending an afternoon, than in having a good rousing gallop with the Drag. Of course there be Drag-hunts and Drag-hunts, and unless the sport is conducted smartly and well, 'twere better far that it should not be done at all. The hounds need not be bred from the Beaufort Justice, but on the other hand, they need not be a set of skulking, skirting brutes, that one "wouldn't be seen dead with." Of course the members of such hunts ride in mufti—more familiarly called, in these degenerate days, "ratcatcher"—but I always think that Huntsman and Whips should be excepted from this rule, and anyone who is privileged to share the fun of the Royal Artillery Draghounds will find that the high officials of the hunt are arrayed, not *certes*, as was Solomon in all his glory, but in the very neatest and smartest of "livery," and nothing could look more sportsmanlike than the dark-blue coat, red collar and cuffs, sur-



mounted by the orthodox black velvet hunting-cap, which are *de rigueur* at Woolwich now. When I first joined in their cheery gallops, there was no hunt uniform, and the appearance of the "turn out" suffered accordingly. Now, nothing is left to be desired in this direction. Good fellowship in the field we have always had, and does not this go far indeed to make up the sum of one's enjoyment? When every man out, almost without exception, knows the rest of the field personally; when a kindly hand is always ready to be stretched forth to aid a brother in distress—when you know every man well enough to say "mind you don't jump on me, old chap, if this 'hairy' comes base over apex at the next fence!" or, "Let me have that place first; I can't hold this beggar!" things all seem so much pleasanter than they are in a country where you know few people, and don't know them very well: yes, sociability, depend upon it, goes very far indeed to make up the charm of any sport, and in none more so than in that of crossing a country.

Let us imagine ourselves arrived at Woolwich and "done well" at luncheon in the R.A. mess. And here I would observe, *par parenthese*, that it would require a big effort of imagination to picture to yourself any occasion upon which you were *not* "done well" within those hospitable

portals. About 2.30 when we are half way through that cigar in the ante-room, which alone "saves one's life" after such a luncheon, a crack of the whip, and a "gently there, Waterloo!" brings us quickly to the window overlooking the parade ground, where hounds have just arrived in charge of the Master and two Whips. We hurry out, after a farewell to such of our kindly hosts as are not intending to accompany us, and find that that big-boned black horse with a hog mane, is intended to carry "Cæsar and his fortunes" this afternoon. A right good one he is, too, with a perfect snaffle mouth. He is "not so young as he was," but "sweet are the uses of adversity," and this fact has its advantages, as he will not fret and worry, and pull one's arms off before starting: he has "joined the band," which is also an excellent thing in its way, because the man just ahead of you can hear him coming, and will, you hope, get out of the way at the next fence! After a short period of moving up and down the parade ground, and exchanging greetings with a few whom you have not had a chance of speaking to before, the word is given, and at that indescribable and, to me, most direful pace, a "hound's jog," off we go along the road over the Common.

How the bricks and mortar fiend has been work-



ing his wicked will with the place since last we saw it! The trots out to the several meets get longer and longer as season after season rolls by. What was once almost our best line, and where for two or three years the annual point-to-point race was held, is now an unwieldy mass of buildings, prominent amongst which stands that gigantic fraud on the long-suffering ratepayers, the Fever Hospital, with its staff of 350 to wait on a maximum of 450 patients!

At last we emerge from the region of building and railway "enterprise" (save the mark!) and see glimpses of the country ahead of us. A winding lane traversed, and we find a gate propped open on our left: here a halt is called. The Master rides into the field, whilst the Whips remain where they are in charge of the pack. Two minutes later our worthy chief returns and addresses the assembled company, not in the studied beauty of language employed by Cicero, nor in the perfervid oratory of Demosthenes, but in a manner very much more to the point than most of the harangues of those somewhat long-winded classics. "Let 'em get over the first fence: then you can ride like blazes!" he says.

The Whips move forward gently: hounds are all bristling with excitement, for they seem to know as

well as we that the moment for action has arrived. “Gently there, Safety! have a care, then!” Yow, yow, yow! from the hounds. Toot, toot, from the Master’s horn, and away they go. “Do wait, you dev—— fellows! You’ll be bang into the middle of ’em! There, now, you can go and be blessed to you!” Amid a confused rush of horses, clatter of hoofs, and babel of tongues, we are away, and thundering down to the first fence, a big quickset. With a crash the first Whip is over or through; it doesn’t matter which so long as he finds himself “all standing” on the right side. Half-a-dozen men make for the same place and great is the thrusting thereunto. The first and second get over: the third man falls: the next alights almost on top of him: now comes a gallant “just joined” one, who does not jump when his horse does, and then that first fence becomes of no further interest to us, for are we not over it, and speeding along at our best sprinting pace towards a line of post and rails, where, the Powers be praised! there is plenty of room for the whole field to have it abreast, if they wished. Two refuse at this: it is a pretty big one, and worse still the timber is *new*: but the next comer smashes the top rail and lets everyone through: then for three or four fields all is plain sailing—brush fences that our steeds



almost gallop through, form the only obstacles. We jump into a park, and "Ware hole!" is the cry: we pull off to the right of where hounds are running in order to avoid the home of the ubiquitous bunny, but not soon enough, unluckily, to save one youngster from a tumble: the horse puts his foot in a rabbit hole and rolls over as if he is shot. "Not hurt a bit! Go on," calls out the rider, pluckily. Yes, no doubt about it, this is the game for the making of young soldiers. On we go, now descending a gentle slope to where an ominous little crowd of yokels and loafers are lining a narrow strip of green on each side: a second glance, as we rise in our stirrups for inspection purposes, shows us that this is evidently looked upon as the sensation "lep" of the run: a good sized brook, in front of which have been placed some stout, well furze-bushed hurdles. The scent has been thoughtfully laid a little on one side of this, so there is no fear of stray hounds getting in one's way. One look shows us that it will take a bit of doing, and hats are crammed on, and horses "taken by the head" in earnest, as the three leading men come along at it. A quick glance round and a lightning calculation as to where you'll go to, should your neighbour whip round or fall just in front of you, and then a vigorous hoist over the hurdles carries

you just clear—and no more than just clear—of the frowning and muddy stream just beyond. The man on your left gets over also, but with one hind leg dropped in: three come slashing over, all right: then little Miffkins, in an agony of incertitude, takes a pull at his horse when within three lengths of where he should take off. Fatal mistake! for he merely succeeds in putting the break on: the horse jumps short, and just clearing the hurdles drops helplessly into the turbid stream amid the ribald jeers and laughter of the crowd assembled. Baulked by this *contre-temps* the next horse refuses, and though ridden at the obstacle again and again, resolutely persists in remaining on the wrong side of the water. But “forrard on, forrard on!” Miffkins will get dry again—he is not hurt, in the least—and his horse will be taught an invaluable lesson in swimming. The pack is still racing away half a field ahead, but they are beginning to “string” a good deal now, from the severity of the pace. And by the same token, most of our good nags are obviously feeling that this sort of fun can’t go on for ever. My own musical steed is, in especial, making the most appalling observations on the subject as we breast the next sharp slope. I feel, somehow, that he is using the equinese for “Hang it all, you know, I’m



not a steam roundabout, my dear chap!" and my heart smites me. Before, however, I can make up my wavering mind as to whether conscience imperatively demands of me "a pull," or not, to my great joy, hounds suddenly throw up their heads where the drag has evidently been lifted, and we find ourselves at the ever welcome check. Most of us slip off our smoking steeds, whose shaking tails and sweat-lathered coats attest the rate at which these three miles have been covered. By twos and threes, the stragglers, and those whose luck is "out," arrive. One man has broken the cantle of his saddle, another has managed to pull his horse's bridle off in the floundering of a fall: here is a rider whose spur has been dragged off his boot: there one who has broken his girths: two men are hatless and another has lost his cigarette case, presumably whilst standing on his head after trying unsuccessfully to negotiate a stile without jumping it. However, these are but common incidents of the chase, and "all in the day's work." The troubles are taken good humouredly, and in the true spirit of philosophy. The men who have second horses out, have now mounted them, whilst the rest of us who intend riding the concluding half of the line, resume acquaintance with our splashed saddles and mud-stained steeds. Trotting off across a road, we again

lay on, and have a gallop of quite five hundred yards before coming to anything in the way of an obstacle. Over a piece of timber, to the tune of a most unholy cracking of top rails, we go, and soon find ourselves approaching the far boundary which offers us the choice of a blind, hairy place, with a big ditch on the far side, a gate securely nailed up, and a greasy-looking foot-bridge adorned with several dangerous-looking holes. This last we all—as I think, wisely—eschew. Some make for the gate: the rest of us try the first-named place. One of the whips goes at it “hell for leather,” and gets over. I, following him, I blush to say, rather—just a very little—too closely, utter a silent prayer that my leader may not fall, and somewhat to my astonishment feel “the musician” apparently disappearing into the bowels of the earth beneath me whilst I shoot over his head and sprawl, spread-eagled, on my hands and face into the ploughed field beyond. He has jumped short and paid the penalty by dropping into the ditch. I shout back “No” to a kindly enquiry as to whether I am hurt, and the questioner gallops on, leaving me to wrestle with the problem of how I am to extract the hog-maned one from his present retreat. As I take him by the rein and wonder how deeply his hind legs are imbedded in the sticky clay, he makes



a wild flounder, plunges up the bank, rams his big, bony head into my chest and causes me to take up a most undignified position, for nothing can look much more aimless than to see the ardent sportsman attired in boots and breeches, seated involuntarily in the wet furrow of a ploughed field, his horse standing over him in an apparently menacing attitude. However, although I felt damped—and was—the animal was out of what might have been “a tight place,” and I climbed into the saddle again with muddy breeches, but a cheerful heart. To catch hounds after this was, of course, out of the question, but I jogged slowly across the field I was in, and felt, I humbly confess, a thrill of unholy joy, as from the farther side of the thick hedge there, I heard a plaintive voice saying:

“Come through the gap and give us a hand, old fellow; I’ve come down, busted both girths and a stirrup leather, lost my curb chain and split my br—waistcoat!”

I was happy again. I had a companion in misfortune, and, better still, one in sorrier plight than my own. By the time we had (as far as a piece of string, two torn handkerchiefs and a neck-tie, the thongs of both hunting crops, and a pair of braces would allow) repaired damages, lighted and smoked a couple of cigars, and talked the day’s

doings over as we rode back to the cheery lights shining from the barrack windows, I for one felt just as happy as if I had managed to live through the whole, instead of only part, of that invigorating gallop with the Woolwich Drag.



## STAG-HUNTING ON EXMOOR

WE sons of Devon are, I doubt not, too prone to dwell and enlarge upon the fact that we are not quite as other men, that when all things were made none was made better than this, our land of sunny skies and mystic moors, of lane and hedgerow, of sea and river, where the balmy fragrance of Torbay invites the winter, and the chill grandeur of Exmoor repels the summer's heat; with goodness overflowing from Porlock to Penzance; the home of traditions and folkspeech that mark us out a people meet to enjoy the wholesomest clime under the canopy of heaven.

I say we are too apt to allow these matters to weigh with us, and breed a smiling contentment and ease of living perhaps not good for those who shall come after us—for those who may be forced to quit their native soil and sojourn among aliens of sharper wits and noisier mode of life. Soft as a Dartmoor bog the South Devon man has been found by those of northern blood, who in mean ways despoil him. Yet if history doth not lie,

there have been sundry occasions when, for stoutness of heart and a kind of obstinacy of courage, the men of the west of England had no need to suffer by comparison with any. To many of us now, alas, the home of our fathers, the haunts of our boyhood, are no longer daily present ; but the exile's memory is strong and vivid, and, aided as is natural by not infrequent visits to them, yields abundant pleasure in the contemplation of spots hallowed to us by fond associations, the tombs of our sires, the scenes of early passion, and perhaps above all, to him of man's estate, the otter bank and Exmoor.

Stronger than death, more lasting than love of woman, is the passion for the chase, and of all those who ride to hounds, the hunter of the wild deer of Devon must surely bear the palm for all the qualities that go to make up the sportsman ; and as I have been challenged to show that this at least is no empty boast, nor figment of the brain, I proceed to tell, for all but those who know it better than I, how the men of Devon hunt the wild red deer.

It was ordained that I should be the first of my race born out of Devon, and there was perhaps allotted to me lacking that birthright a keener relish for all that Devon yields, so that a certain home-sickness will often befall me, which that



sweet air and homely speech and hospitable fare only may cure. It is then I go west, go where merrie England is merrie England still, remote from stir and traffic of modern life, forgotten of civilization and the so-called march of mind. Cathay within three hundred miles of Paddington Station!

Not many years ago there came over me the old longing. As summer merged into autumn it got into my blood and there being no help for it, ere September waned I packed my bag and set out for Exmoor. There, descendants of the tall deer whom the Conqueror "loved as if he were their father," were to be found in plenty, hunted with horn and hound, captured and slain.

As much in the spirit of the pilgrim as of the sportsman, I made my way to where the river Exe and its big brother Barle have union. To Dulverton I fared, even as John Ridd had fared two hundred years before, and as I crossed the threshold of the Red Lion, recalled John Fry's striding into the hostel, "with the air and grace of a short-legged man, and shouting as loud as if he were calling sheep upon Exmoor."

"Hot mootton pasty for twoo trarv'lers, at number vaive, in vaive minnits! Dish un up in the tin with the grahvy, zame as I hardered last Tuesday."

In these days Dulverton may be said to exist

for one purpose only, that of hunting the stag—with perhaps a little fishing thrown in. The oldest inhabitant will meet you upon the bridge, and with true Devonshire garrulity discourse of stag. Sauntering alongside you the length of its single street, he will point out the abode of the tailor (who makes hunting garments), of the cobbler (who makes riding boots). A saddler's shop is almost an appanage of the inn under whose portico, on the day of my arrival, a fuming sportsman and a well "done" horse were eloquent of stag. In the town there was suppressed excitement, and what passes in those parts for bustle and stir. The traffic had a way of suddenly disappearing down an alley which led to the banks of the Barle, and so to Exford. Needless to say, the attraction at Exford was Mr Bisset's kennels, nor would any peace or comfort reign in Dulverton until such time as news should arrive of the find and the kill.

That evening we sat in the stone-floored parlour of the inn and drank cider out of blue pint mugs—no true son of Devon drinks from a tumbler—and by my side was the warped old man who had weathered eighty Exmoor winters, and who told of the season of bitter frost when the red deer would come by the score of a morning to the farmers' ricks of corn and hay and clover, and some



of them so tame that they would present themselves at the back door for a drink of water.

On the following day, things had quieted down. The staghounds were in kennel; and although the Exmoor foxhounds met in the neighbourhood for cub-hunting, heedless people went their way and took no notice of a pursuit only distantly connected with stag.

At last the eventful or stag-hunting day is ushered in, and as usual one's preparations are discovered at the last moment to be incomplete. A refractory boot causes delay and consequent anguish to a small party who have to travel with me on wheels from Dulverton to the meet at Venniford Cross; for eighteen Devonshire miles are before us, and it is conceivable that the day would have ended before our journey, had our coachman been other than a native Jehu. A man must live in the west of England to get used to driving horses at a hand-gallop up and down hills of which the gradient is sometimes less than 1 in 4 and sometimes more. And so we go on, our driver singing—

“When the wind whistles cold on the moors of a night,  
All along, down along, out along lee,  
Tom Pearce's ould mare doth appear gashly white,  
Wi' Bill Brewer, Jan Slewer, Peter Gurney, Peter Davy,  
Dan'l Whiddon, Harry Hawke;  
Old Uncle Tom Cobleigh and all, old Uncle Tom Cobleigh  
and a—a—ll.”

At noon we reach Venniford Cross and find our horses who were sent on yesterday, little short-legged animals with perfect shoulders and forelegs of iron ; as well they may have, to climb almost perpendicular hills and gallop over the rugged Devonian slate country, which attains its greatest elevation on Exmoor. The stream of traffic was enormous, or so it seemed in those unfrequented parts. The countryside was agog, and for twenty miles round few Devonians able to sit a horse can have been absent from the meet. Here leaked out a change of venue : it had been determined to draw the gorse and the combes which seam the side of Dunkery, and so for some miles we jogged on by road, sometimes at a walk, often at a fast trot, but always ascending higher and higher. We seemed to be climbing heights of stupendous proportions.

Cloutsham is at length reached, and on the plateau assembled the sort of "field" that Devon and Somerset turn out when the staghounds are afoot. There are the sporting farmer, a doctor or two, boys on ponies, parsons on cobs, strangers from London, neighbours from South Devon, the master of Pixton and other "county" people, and of course every hunting lady of the district, not all of whom use the side saddle ! Among this goodly company hardly one is there whose thoughts and



anxieties are not centred on the chase—the chase stripped of polish and luxury, the chase divorced from good cheer and even from opportunities for vain display. The instinct and passion of the hunter possesses them all.

We have all come long journeys and have perhaps many hours to remain in the saddle; and now is the time to ease our horses. The field dismounts, and booted ladies are seen seated by the roadside, or seeking refreshment of milk and bread and clotted cream at an adjacent farmhouse. While the “tufters” are drawing, we look round again and inly rejoice that Exmoor is still a vast wild tract hardly civilised. Around it Brendon common lies unenclosed, and the miles from Alderman’s Barrow to the east of Dunkery are unbroken by a fence. We are told of rare birds and beasts to be seen there along with the red deer which have had a home in Exmoor from time immemorial; polecats are found, though now somewhat rarely; the Montagu’s harrier is occasionally seen; a snowy owl was shot some few years back, and only two years ago a pelican was found walking about on the North Forest if the story of a Somersetshire farmer may be believed. The stag-hunting country is a matter of six and thirty miles, which often the tireless hounds will cross from end to end after their quarry.

Surely the most important, interesting, and difficult part of the chase of the wild deer is the "harbouring," as it is called. How fine an exercise of woodcraft! The harbourer's best guide is the slot, or footprint of the deer, which, to the experienced eye, tells whether the deer afoot be stag or hind, and whether of proper age to hunt and kill. Four or five hours are often spent by the most skilful harbourer in tracking a warrantable stag to his lair. The deer duly harboured, the next thing is to rouse him, and force him to break cover and run for dear life. Selected hounds called "tufters" are laid on the drag, and master, huntsman, whip and harbourer, post themselves where they will be able to stop the hounds after this purpose is served.

Looking across the declivity in front of us, we see the wooded slopes where a stag has been harboured. The scarlet jackets of huntsman and whips move about in the distance, directing the tufters by horn and voice. "There he goes, sir," at length cries a schoolboy on his pony, whose sharp eyes have detected the graceful bound of a deer; but it is a hind, and the schoolboy is told that, although hinds are hunted later on, the present is a close time for them, and that our jolly company of sportsmen and ladies will not ride to hounds this



day unless a warrantable stag be found. Our "harboured" stag had evidently wandered on.

Let us leave the field to indulge in that gossip for which Devonians are famous, and follow at a respectful distance the tufters now moving across Cloutsham Ball to Ten Acre Cleeve. We of course find it necessary almost immediately to negotiate a combe, that is, to descend the sides of one of those deep ravines with which Exmoor abounds. We yield the reins and see our horse's head disappear between our knees, his croup rises to our neck, and so we slip, shuffle, and slide down the precipitous pathway. In the bottom of the combe, we meet the tufters returning; they have roused their stag, and now rejoin the pack. Jogging forward, we see a noble beast of chase, large as an eastern donkey, the antlered monarch of Exmoor, trotting in a leisurely way, and evidently making for Holm Wood.

Jumping the fence into the fields by Bucket Hole, our stag has met a woman and two children, who flourished a pink apron at him, so he has turned back, showing how easily sometimes a stag may be headed if he has formed no definite plan as to where he will go; within five minutes we were to see how hopeless a task it is to head a stag when he is determined to make his point. Crossing the combe towards us, the stag came up to the edge of the

bushes and coasted along the side, while we rode along the heather on the ridge, in the vain hope that we could keep him out of the Porlock Coverts. Just by Whitestones he turned up, and, undismayed by the shouting and smacking of whips, trotted up to our horses. Riding at him was no good; a sudden stop with lowered antlers—all his rights and three on top both sides—a bound to one side or another, and he is behind you, and perfectly ready to encounter the next one; horses, too, will not go near a stag if they can help it.

Although we did all we knew to turn him, I do not think we forced him fifty yards from the course he would have taken had he been left to himself. Andrew Miles always declared that there was only one way to turn a stag, and it would have required an exceedingly well-drilled field, proof against the temptation to look at the stag, to carry out his plan. "Get right in front of the stag," Miles would say, "and ride as hard as you can go for the point to which he is making; he will dodge round you if you ride at him, but he will not deliberately follow you."

But now our stag, with an air of insulted majesty, turns his back upon us and sets out for his long last journey. He must rouse himself, for the soul-stirring notes of the hounds float towards us. The



pack is at length laid on, the sweet scent fills the big hounds with delirious joy, and in long drawn file they race forward, and the chase begins.

We had a nice gallop over Skilgate Common and down a steep, root-grown slope, through the Bittscombe plantations. The stag turned down the valley to Raddington. Despite the blazing sun and intense heat, hounds ran fast, but Devonian's wilds are not everywhere to be invaded, and here the sobbing horses must pound along the road, while the hounds turn up over a grass field as steep as the side of a house; some riders indeed climbed up, some cast forward, others like myself cast back towards Skilgate, on the chance of the stag swinging round towards Haddon again; but we were wrong, as he went straight over the top, past Hove and Quarterly, into the Exe valley by Morebath, running through several little coverts. From this point I was beaten out of my country and hardly know how to tell of our wanderings.

The stag worked the line of a brook past Shillingford as far as Hockley bridge where he soiled, but the eager hounds gave little respite, and our new-found stag went away up a little valley to the left. Hounds ran on fast, keeping about a hundred yards from the lane, which helped us to get along, for Devonshire banks with the leaves on cannot be

ridden over in September. The heat and dust were something to be remembered, but hounds pushed on, hovering a minute where bullocks had been over the line, and again where a mare and foal charged them in a most determined manner doing, luckily, no harm. Huntsham seemed to be the point, a good old-fashioned line often travelled by deer fifty years ago, but most unusual now.

Leaving Huntsham on the right, we went on by Cudmore to Hole Lake, hounds running on grass, horses again pounding along the road. Now we turn into the fields and gallop alongside the pack, which kept on in most determined manner, and with more music than is usually given on so hot a day. We soon got into a maze of small combes running down to the brook which passes under Huntsham Wood. From gate to gate, and gap to gap we hie, keeping as near hounds as may be, and passed a farm which I was told is Redwood. A patch of ferny gorse-covered ground is Bere Down, across which hounds ran fast, much disturbing a pony at grass, who jumped the fence down the biggest drop I ever saw anything except a deer come over in safety. The stag went down the line of the brook till its junction with the bigger Loman Water near Chief Loman. Here a long check refreshed us, the stag having worked



first the road and then the water for a long distance. The pack puzzled it out slowly, both Anthony and Col. Hornby dismounting to keep close to them through the impassable places. Then we heard a holloa ahead, and hounds were lifted about a quarter of a mile to Land's Mill, when they hit off the line, just owning it down the road, and so recall us to the chase.

The field seemed hardly to diminish, though it kept changing; many of those from the Minehead and Dunster side stopped and went home, but every hamlet, every farm we passed, brought out recruits eager to see the hounds, for they do not often come this way. The whole country was in a wild state of commotion and excitement. A capital gallop over a ridge of hills, where the chase went through a field of roots, which some gentlemen were just beginning to shoot over (and much I fear we spoiled their sport), brought us to the Western Canal, where the stag swam over, while we crossed by a bridge, and went on again to the Halberton lane. In the field beyond, sheep had foiled the ground, but hounds cast forward, and were soon running again down to the canal, which here "ran a ring." Hounds feathered down the towing-path and over the railway, where we had to make a *détour*. We had just rejoined them when there

was a burst of music, and the stag was seen swimming in the canal. He scrambled out, ran down the road a few hundred yards with the pack at his heels, and then jumped over the fence into ploughed ground, where he fell, and was rolled over a moment afterwards, when he was found to have a broken leg. The fatal stab to the heart was dealt as soon as our stag was taken, and now the hounds must be given their portion. "Look at that!" exclaims a sporting farmer as the body is turned over and the legs are seen standing stark and stiff in the air. "Ay, properly runned up, poor thing," answers the huntsman, who is busy anatomising. "Brisher, bother your old head, you'm always after the venison." And Brusher, who has stolen forward and began licking the haunch, beats a hasty retreat, not without a taste of whipcord. Then the hounds' portion is made over to them, the huntsman reserves his perquisites, and the head being claimed by the Master, all the farmers of the district account for the venison share and share alike. The run lasted exactly seven hours from the lay on; the last hour and a-half we hunted in the dark. Eight only of us saw the finish.

And now looking over my record of this memorable run how bare an itinerary it seems, lacking the mental eye to fill up the scene with luscious



autumn tints, and lacking too the stir and movement of the chase. Then the blood boils in veins of horse and man, then a fierce energy urges on the pursuers. What can compare with it, but the wild charge of cavalry? The occasion past, however, our pulse resumes its normal beat, and presently in slumber the scene and all its glories fade away. But not the memory fades! Year by year while trouble, sickness, hopes and longings get blotted from our recollection, the printed page or glance at whip and spur, shall revive with more than pristine splendour, the memory of the chase.

And what of the stag? Well, the stag's life is not, I fear, a happy one; for him no sooner is one trouble past than another is upon him. During the summer his horns are growing and keep him in constant irritation and anxiety. The velvet is hardly lost when the fever of the rutting season consumes him. Then there is the hard winter to live through, and with the return of spring returns also the period for the shedding of old horns, and sprouting of new ones. Indeed, it is only for a few weeks in every year that the stag is his perfect self, and those weeks, with a small margin before and after, constitute what is called the stag-hunting season, a season of relief to the

farmer whose turnip crops have been ruined by the herd's depredations, a season of anxiety to the master of the Devon and Somerset staghounds, a season of delight to him who loves the chase. Pleasure unalloyed, indeed, for so long as fortune favours him, but assuredly the day will sooner or later arrive when a grip or cart rut on Exmoor will turn horse and rider over, when the red grass or white bog flower that should warn the horseman to "take a pull" is overlooked or disregarded, with alarming results. The least of the ills that flesh is heir to, when stag-hunting on Exmoor, is to lose one's way twenty miles from home, and be found a solitary horseman wandering on the moor, soaked to the skin, out of hail of any living creature but forest ponies, and uneasily musing on the old nurse-tales of pixies. If, in such case, you are fortunate enough to stumble upon a moorland farm, do not fail to accept the shelter which will surely be offered; and so shall the congratulations of your friends sound sweet in your ears when you return safe and sound on the morrow. Your landlord also, if you are staying at an inn and hunting on a hired mount, will welcome you with such evident sincerity that you feel sure it is not unconnected with the recovery of his horse.



## SPORT AMONGST THE MOUNTAINS

BY "SARCELLE"

It is a gloriously bright, glowing autumn morning, a light breeze ruffles the clear, blue surface of the Atlantic, or rather of a little bay thereof, which lies in a pretty setting of hills and mountains just in front of the window whereat I am writing, beyond the hydrangeas and fuchsias of the garden and an intervening stretch of marshland, home of many a snipe and duck. As the day is bright, and the water in the river low, there is but little chance of hooking either salmon or trout before evening; therefore, instead of "dropping a line" to those finny aristocrats, I will endeavour to "improve the shining hour" by writing a few lines about them, and their "followers."

Truly a fitting room is this in which to write of matters piscatorial—ay, of sport in general. In a corner, just two feet to the left of me, are my two beloved rods, a trout fly-rod and a trolling-rod; by the opposite end of the fire-place repose a handsome

salmon-rod, and a landing-net of portentous dimensions, so huge that it looks more suitable for Og, king of Bashan, or Goliath of Gath, than for any modern mortal: but it is not upon record that those large gentlemen ever studied the quaint pages of "The Contemplative Man's Recreation." Two chairs off me lies my old creel, which had eleven good sea-trout in it yesterday, but now contains only my precious fly-book, its cover shiny with hundreds of glittering scales of the beautiful fish, which I shall be at no pains to remove; for when I am far away from these charming scenes those scales shall remind me of the river and the lough, of the mountains and the heather, of the grouse and the snipe, and of the genial companions it has been my good luck to meet in old Ireland.

A little beyond my fishing-basket is a sideboard which is littered with central-fire cartridges, tins of powder, and bags of shot. It is also adorned by one or two short clay pipes, and by a "billy-cock" hat, which, like almost every other hat in this inn, is covered with the most approved "casts" of salmon and trout-flies. In the corner, by the sideboard, two more rods and another landing-net; on the floor, sundry and divers pairs of sturdy-looking shooting boots. Next we come to a big salmon-creel, three central-fire guns, and a muzzle-loader;



more hats, adorned with bunches of heather and casts of flies ; a big shrimp-net (by the way, I and a fellow-sportsman took about five quarts of beautiful prawns with that latter one afternoon) ; more pipes, more fishing-rods.

In one corner of the room is a stuffed badger, which was pulled out of a deep and narrow hole, after a struggle of nearly two hours, by a white bull-terrier with a brown patch over one eye, who is now lying at my feet. On the chimney-piece are a grouse and a peregrine falcon, the latter incurring grave penalties by "the wearing of the green," for some friendly hand has adorned it with a little Dolly Varden hat of that colour. Now to complete his notion of my immediate surroundings, the reader must picture another window at the other end of this room, looking out not upon the sea, but upon a high heathery mountain, the home of the grouse and the hare ; and he must imagine frequent interruptions from the incursions of friendly dogs, pointers, setters, retrievers, greyhounds, and terriers. Yes, the whole atmosphere of this house is evidently of the sport, sporting ; the "commercial" would be at a discount here ; all are lovers of the rod or gun, many of both ; and those of the fair sex who honour us with their presence—thank goodness we are not without their refining and

humanising influence—take a keen interest in our sport, and are proud of the doings of their respective husbands, brothers, or sons—for there are several family-parties staying here.

Some of my readers with sporting proclivities are already beginning to ask, “Where is this ‘happy hunting ground?’” Alas, I fear me that I must not proclaim it in the pages of so popular a periodical as this, for there were nine rods on the little river yesterday, and our worthy hostess has her house nearly full of people, and her hands quite full of work; and if it were only generally known in London how delightful a place is the White Trout Inn (that is the most appropriate *sobriquet* I can think of for the moment), we should be flooded with eager sportsmen, the rivers would be over-fished, the moors over-shot, and the place spoiled. Before I dilate further on the delights of the White Trout Inn and its surroundings, I must lay down my pen for a brief space, and devote myself to the consumption of a hearty breakfast, at which some of the fish, from which the inn takes its name, invariably figure, accompanied generally by eggs and bacon, grilled mutton, and other solid viands.

It is done, the inner man is refreshed; and though a stronger breeze has sprung up, bringing clouds with it, and rods are off to the river, and



guns to the mountain, and a knowing old professional angler in long-tailed frieze coat, indescribable hat, knee breeches, and black stockings, opines that there is a good chance for both trout and salmon, I must forego the sport for the present, and finish my appointed task. The White Trout Inn is not situated in a town, nor even in a village, though there are a few scattered houses here and there, but the place has the inestimable advantage to the sportsman of being twenty miles distant from a railway. Within a comfortable hour's walk of mine inn is a lovely lake five miles in length, surrounded by mountains as grand as artist could desire. White villas nestle here and there on the wooded slopes that lead down to the clear blue water, dotted with sundry fishing-boats, from which anglers are throwing the fly for salmon or trout, both of which swarm in the lake.

From the lake down to the sea a beautiful river runs a picturesque course of about four miles, in a valley with mountains on the one side and well-cultivated hills and slopes on the other; and in every part of the river are to be found the noble salmon, the brilliant white or sea-trout, and their humble relative, the brown trout—in England a prize coveted by most anglers, and esteemed by most *gourmands*, but here looked upon with con-

tempt alike by fishermen and epicures, being far exceeded both in strength and gamesomeness, and in delicacy of flavour, by its migratory brother from the sea. The fishing in both river and lake is free to visitors at this inn, who have, moreover, the privilege of shooting over some of the neighbouring mountains, where may be found grouse, hares, woodcock, and snipe. There is grand duck-shooting here in the season, and the lovely bay affords an immense abundance and variety of sea fish to those who like a good breeze and a bit of heavy hand-pulling, as an occasional change after many days' fly-fishing. We have a glorious sandy beach, where sea-bathing may be enjoyed untrammelled by conventionalities of machines or costumes. We have always some of "the best of all good company" here; in fact, one gentleman, as true a sportsman as ever crossed country, drew trigger, or threw salmon-fly, has taken up his abode here *en permanence*, and finds sport of some kind for nearly every day in the year.

I must not omit to mention that, for those who like to take rifle or shot-gun out to sea with them, we have seals pretty frequently, and a great abundance of large wild-fowl. Our larder, I need hardly say, is kept constantly supplied with the best of fish and game, and the "cellar's as good as the cook,"



the whisky especially being undeniable and insinuating, and "divil a headache in a hogshhead of it."

But I am to say something about salmon-fishing. Faith, it's difficult to say anything new about it, inspiring and exciting theme though it be. The *rationale* of it I utterly renounce. We know pretty well why a trout takes an artificial fly. It is a tolerably correct imitation of a natural insect, which is the natural food of our spotted friend; and the different flies which are used on different waters, and during the various months, are constantly changed to correspond with the proper insects frequenting each locality at each period. Of course, this is reasonable enough. A trout is lying on the look-out for flies, and something comes floating down the stream towards him, which so closely resembles his natural food, that he sees no earthly (or watery) reason to suppose it to be unwholesome, and he takes it, and—it disagrees with him. But why on earth a salmon should ever make such a fool of himself as to jump at a huge, gaudy arrangement of feathers, fur, silk, &c., which is not an imitation of anything "in the heavens above or the earth below, or the waters under the earth," the nearest approach to a faithful simile for which would seem to be an imaginary cross between a humming-bird and a butterfly, altogether

passes my comprehension. Still more astonishing is it that these extraordinary objects must be varied in size, colours, and sundry other particulars, according to locality and time of year.

But let not the reader, who is yet unlearned in the craft, imagine that *every* salmon is such a fool as to leap at the gaudy lure. From my little experience of the number of these princely fish which run up certain rivers, and the small proportion of them which fall victims to the rod, I would rather be inclined to come to the conclusion that these unhappy individuals must either be lunatics or morbid misanthropical (misopiscical?) specimens of the genus, that a fish who takes the fly is either entirely bereft of his senses, or has firmly made up his mind, wearied with subaqueous trials, to hang himself—upon a hook—and that his vigorous struggles after he is hooked are to be accounted for by that instinct of self-preservation which is the first law of nature, and which often leads a would-be suicide, after he has jumped into the water, to exert himself might and main to get out of it again.

Not the least charm of salmon-fishing is the wild grandeur of the scenery in which the best of it is found, heather-clad mountains, ravines, and gorges, rapid, rushing streams, plashing waterfalls, deep smooth pools, and huge rocks here and there



in the river, adding picturesqueness to the scene and increased danger to the line.

Who has not read vivid descriptions of the killing of a salmon ?

First comes the "rise," no little circling splash like that of a trout, but a rushing boil in the water, hailed with a joyous shout by the angler and his attendant ; then there is a momentary check ; then the merry music of the clicking reel as the fish rushes off, perchance quite slowly at first, not apparently quite alive to the danger of his position ; but when the fact dawns upon him that the little sting in the tail of the fly he snapped at is attached to something that is seriously menacing his liberty, his struggles become exciting in the extreme. Now comes a swift rush, taking out some fifty yards of line without a check. Now he is seen for a moment—of extreme danger to the tackle—throwing himself high out of water, a huge bar of brightest silver, falling back into it again with a splash. Instantaneous guesses are made at his weight ; then comes a long run, fatiguing for both fish and fisherman, up and down stream ; then the salmon, getting rather fagged, half turns on his side near the opposite bank, but he is of no use over there. A little later on he comes over to our side, and Sandy or Patsy, as the case may be, "makes an

offer" at him with the gaff, but it is too soon; the fish, roused to fresh life by the sight of the horrid biped, exerts all his remaining strength—we have two or three last frantic rushes, moments of intense excitement, during which we have not one single thought for anything in the wide world but that salmon and that gaff. At last the gallant fellow is near the bank, thoroughly tired this time—the gaff is in his quivering flesh; Patsy struggles up the bank with our glittering prize; the fish is knocked on the head, the fly carefully cut out, the hackles blown and cleared of blood or dirt—for some salmon-flies are worth from fifteen shillings to two pounds each—and then we and Patsy, or Sandy, can sit down on the bank and enjoy our well-earned rest.

First we must have a "tot" of whisky to "wet that fish"; then Patsy says, "Sure now, yer honour 'll be afther giving the blessed pool a bit of rest, an' we'll thry another directly."

So we sit and enjoy the beauty of the mountain and river scenery, with a pipe of good tobacco and a frequent furtive glance at the salmon, till a freshening breeze, or the sight of a rising fish, inspires us with fresh courage, to result, if we are lucky, in a fresh capture.

Pleasant, too, is the fishing from a boat on the



rippling surface of our fair gem of a lake in the grand setting of those majestic mountains ; ay, and pleasant too when the salmon are sulky, is the fishing for the beautiful white trout in the various streams between the lake and the tideway ; and exciting indeed is the struggle when a white trout with glittering scales, only a few hours from the sea, is hooked on a small trout-fly and fine drawn gut—for your sea-trout is the most active of fish, and will give the angler a braver fight than a brown trout of more than double his size, flinging himself constantly high into the air, a silvery flash of light, game to the very last, making rush after rush, and spring after spring, when you think he should be quite safe for the landing-net.

Ay, and when the shades of evening are falling over mountain and valley, river, lake, and bay, when the smoke from the chimney of our inn, rising from amongst the trees which surround it, suggests busy doings at the huge peat-fire in the kitchen, pleasant is the walk or drive back to that snug hostelry, and jovial the dinner—with salmon and trout fresh from lake and river, grouse not *quite* so fresh from the mountain, and snipe from the marsh.

Genial and jolly, too, is the evening talk over our glasses of punch, the recital of incidents of

sport during the day, the comparison of flies, the arrangement of plans for the morrow. "Early to bed and early to rise," is a very good motto generally for the sportsman; but there *are* seasons when the morning fishing is of but little account, and, mindful of this, we prolong our *symposia* and our yarns far into the small hours till our stock of anecdotes and tobacco are alike exhausted.

Many a rich man has paid down his hundreds for the rental of part of a salmon river, and perhaps his fish have cost him twenty to a hundred guineas each. But then again the poor professional anglers often make a good living by it, partly by the salmon they catch, and partly by acting as guides and instructors to tourists and amateurs. And here let me tell the reader to take the anecdotes of his tourist friends anent the salmon they have killed in Ireland or Scotland *cum grano salis*. I believe that about nineteen out of twenty fish "taken" by non-resident amateurs are risen and hooked by Patsy or Sandy aforesaid.

The most delicate part of the negotiation having thus been effected, the rod is carefully handed to the amateur, and he is instructed how to humour and play the fish, which is gaffed at last, and he may certainly be *said* to have *killed* it, though he was not exactly the man who caught it.



But to do Patsy or Sandy justice he is—though sometimes, *sub rosa*, a bit of a poacher—a keen lover of real sport, and infinitely prefers accompanying anyone who can throw a fly and kill a fish himself to one of the amateurs aforesaid, in spite of the heavier fee he may expect from the latter.

A friend called one day on a professional fisherman near here, and found him lugging a big table about his cabin by the aid of a hook and a bit of a line. “What the divil are ye doin’ at all at all?” asked his friend Corny. “Sure, thin, I’d betther be brakin’ the hook in the table than brakin’ it in a salmon,” was the reply.

And this little yarn bears a very good practical moral. See that your tackle is sound and perfect in every respect before you go after salmon.

Ludicrous incidents sometimes happen in salmon-fishing. A bungling amateur on the Bandon river, near Cork, hooked something which seemed to him to be an immense and very sulky salmon. The stream was swift, but the fish never travelled very far, moving sluggishly about and resisting all his efforts to bring it to the surface.

At last, after a long but very uneventful play of about two hours, the thing came into a more rapid part of the stream, lifted to the top of the water, and behold, a big ox-hide, which had been sunk in

that part of the river ! The disgust of that angler, and the profane language he gave way to, may be imagined. A friend of mine had a long play with what seemed to be a very heavy spring fish, but at last it came to the top, when the attendant Patsy exclaimed, “Bedad, it’s a judy, sir !” And a “judy” it was, that is, a spent fish or kelt, but it was hooked by the tail, which accounts for the vigorous play it gave.

There is a rather strong religious sentiment among some of our Irish professional salmon-fishers. One of them has been known at the commencement of a season to sprinkle his patron’s rod, line, and flies with holy water, as a potent charm. Another worthy was out the other day with a friend of mine fishing for white trout. My friend hooked a nice strong fish over two pounds, which got away after a brief play. In the first excitement of this loss his attendant exclaimed, “Oh, the divil carry him then !” but, suddenly bethinking himself, added, “an’ may God forgive me for cursin’ the blessed fish—that didn’t take a good hould !”

But the day has become so beautifully breezy and cloudy that I can’t possibly sit here any longer, knowing that all my brethren of the craft are on the river or the lake, so I will e’en pick up rod, shoulder basket, and be off after them. Kind reader, I crave your indulgence, and—*Au revoir.*



## A BIRMINGHAM DOG SHOW \*

BY "OLD CALABAR"

FOURTEEN years have passed away and somewhat mildewed my hair since the first show of dogs took place at Birmingham.

How many glorious fellows connected with that and subsequent exhibitions have "gone from our gaze," never again to be seen by those who were "hail-fellow well met" with them!

Poor Frederick Burdett, Paul Hakett, George Jones, George Moore, that inimitable judge of a pointer; Joseph Lang, and lately, Major Irving, with a host of others, have passed away.

Ruthless Death, with his attendant, "Old Father Time," has mowed them down in quick succession without favour or distinction.

It makes one sad to think of it; and also to know that some who are in the land of the living have, to use a sporting expression, "cut it."

For years I have not seen "the Prior," "Idstone," the Revs. O'Grady and Mellor, John Walker of Hali-

\* It should be mentioned that this paper was written several years ago.—Ed. *S.S.*

fax, and Croppen of Horncastle. Yet I know that some of them are still to the fore in dog matters, and are running their race against "all time."

Poor Walker, by-the-by, I saw last year. He was unfortunately shot by accident some two or three seasons back by a friend; he has never, if I may so term it, "come with a rush" again. William Lort, one of our oldest judges, is hard at work here, there, and everywhere, with one or two more of the old circuit.

What has become of Viscount Curzon, who so well filled the chair at the Annual Dinner? Death has been busy again, for Viscount Curzon is, by the demise of his father, now Earl Howe. The last time I saw his Lordship was at the "Hen and Chickens" at Birmingham, in 1869. Poor Lord Garvagh was on his right hand; he too has gone "the way of all flesh."

On that occasion I remember that prince of good fellows, R. L. Hunt, who has been connected with the show from its commencement, singing a song that made our hair curl, and drove one or two white-tied gentlemen from the room.

The Earl Howe has been chairman of the Committee ever since the show was started, and Mr George Beech, the secretary, nearly as long; and right well has he done his work.



I do not exactly know with whom the idea of dog shows originated. My old friend, the late Major Irving, told me it was with Frederick Burdett; others have informed me it was Mr Brailsford, the father of the present men, and formerly keeper to the Earl of Derby, the present Earl's father. Whoever it originated with, it was a happy idea, and has given endless amusement to thousands.

As I have often stated, I do not think shows have improved the breed of dogs, but they have brought many strains forward which were known nothing about before, except to a few.

Dog shows have opened the door to a good deal of roguery; unscrupulous breeders have bred dogs for size, head, coat, and colour. To effect this they have mixed up strains; the consequence is that, although it cannot be detected by the judges, the animals are, in reality, nothing more or less than mongrels; this has been done more particularly in the sporting classes, and with fox-terriers especially.

But dog shows are wonderfully popular all over the kingdom. It has not rested with us alone, for the French have for years had exhibitions, and this year there was one at Vienna.

It has often surprised me there is so much wrangling, and so many letters from disappointed exhibitors, after a dog show. The same thing does

not occur in cattle and horse shows ; why then with dog shows ?

The Birmingham Dog Show is a favourite of mine. Everything is so well conducted and carried out. The comfort of the animals is strictly attended to, and the building is spacious and airy. You see so many old friends you would not otherwise meet, which makes it very enjoyable.

One of the most celebrated breeders of blood-hounds is Major John A. Cowen, of Blaydon Burn, Blaydon-on-Tyne ; and he has also a famous breed of setters, but he never has a bad one of any sort.

All coursing men breed good greyhounds, so I cannot pitch on anyone in particular for these—and fox-hounds, deer-hounds, otter-hounds, harriers or beagles, are bred by so many that I cannot pick out anyone in particular.

The most celebrated breeders of fox-terriers are Messrs Murchison and Gibson, Brokenhurst, Lymington, Hants ; Mr Cropper, of Horncastle, and Mr T. Wootton, Mapperley, near Nottingham. Of pointers, small and medium-sized, perhaps Mr Whitehouse, Ipsley Court, Redditch, Warwickshire, is the best known ; of the large size, Mr Thomas Smith, The Grange, Tettenhall, Wolverhampton ; Richard Garth, Esq., Q.C. ; Lord Downe, Danby Lodge, Yarm,



Yorkshire; Mr Francis R. Hemming, Bentley Manor, Bromsgrove, and others. Of setters, R. Ll. Purcell-Llewellyn, Esq., Willesley Hall, Ashby-de-la-Zouche, Leicestershire; Edward Laverack, Esq., Broughall Cottage, near Whitchurch, Shropshire; Geo. Jones, Esq., Ivy Cottage, Ascott; Thomas Pilkington, Esq., Lyme Grove, Prescott, Lancashire; Major John A. Cowen, Blaydon Burn, Blaydon-on-Tyne; Captain Thomas Allaway, Highbury House, near Lydney; Captain Richard Cooper, Thornly Hall, Welford, Rugby; Capt. Hutchison; The Prior, and many others. Of retrievers, I shall only name one, Mr J. D. Gorse, Old Manor House, Radcliffe-on-Trent, Notts. His curly black-coated dogs are the handsomest I ever saw.

There are so many different breeds of spaniels that I will not attempt to name any breeders—their name is legion—neither do I intend to touch on the non-sporting classes; but should anyone wish to know where any particular sort of dog is to be had, and will write to me, I shall have great pleasure in giving him every information.

Gentlemen who are anxious to become members of a canine society, cannot, I imagine, do better than belong to the National, which is composed of many of the first noblemen and sportsmen in the United Kingdom.

The society held their show the latter part of last year at Nottingham, and a very capital show it was, too, and bids fair to be second to none.

To exhibitors, disappointed or otherwise, I would say, never mind the reports you read in papers as to the merits or demerits of your dogs; remember that such reports are only the production of *one*, and that one may know just as much of a dog as he does of the man in the moon. It is amusing to read the accounts of a show in the different papers. I have very frequently seen every one of them disagree; one calling a dog a splendid animal; another, that the said splendid animal was nothing but a cur: so I say, never be disheartened at what the papers may write, and remember the fable of the old man and his ass.

Curzon Hall has been much enlarged of late years, and it is now not nearly big enough for the number of dogs that are sent. It is a fine building, and eminently adapted for the purpose. Walking along the galleries, which are very spacious, you can look over and see all the dogs below and the people as well.

The entries this year are exactly thirty-three in advance of 1872. Take it altogether, it is the best entry, as to numbers and quality, they have ever had. The total entries in the sporting classes were



557; viz.:—10 blood-hounds, 23 deer-hounds, 19 greyhounds, 4 otterhounds, 11 harriers, 8 beagles, 127 fox-terriers, 85 pointers, 87 setters, 78 retrievers, 82 spaniels, 15 Dachshunds, and 5 in the extra class for any foreign breed of sporting dogs.

For dogs not used in field-sports there were 387 entries; viz.:—46 mastiffs, 24 St Bernards, 19 Newfoundlands, 26 sheep-dogs, 6 Dalmatians, 23 bull-dogs, 27 bull-terriers, 15 smooth-haired terriers, 25 black-and-tan terriers, 16 Skye terriers, 15 Dandie Dinmonts, 6 broken-haired terriers, 17 Bedlington terriers, 12 wire-haired terriers, 14 Pomeranians, 19 pugs, 6 Maltese, 7 Italian greyhounds, 8 Blenheim spaniels, 7 King Charles spaniels, 28 toy terriers, and 21 foreign dogs.

I have before remarked that many, very many, find fault with the decisions of judges when there is no occasion to do so, and some when there is just reason; but they should remember it is not etiquette to question the judges' fiat. They enter their dogs subject to those who are chosen to adjudicate on their merits; and after the awards are made, right or wrong, there should be an end to the matter.

I have always thought, and always shall think,

that the public would be much more satisfied if they knew who the judges would be at the time a show was advertised. Those intending to exhibit could then do as they liked, enter or not. But, on the other hand, if this were done, the entries would not be nearly so numerous, and the receipts smaller in proportion ; but in such a show as Birmingham, where the Committee have a good balance in hand, it would not much matter. At any rate, it is worth the trial. The Birmingham Committee is composed of men who are thoroughly well up on the subject, and have, doubtless, good reasons for continuing as they do.

An attempt was made, some years ago, of judging by points—a thoroughly absurd notion, and one worthy of those from whom it emanated.

Fancy men who really knew what a dog was, going about with a tape, like a tailor ! Would you see judges of horses or cattle doing this ? Perhaps to take the girth of a bullock it might be, and is done ; but that is all, except weighing them. When the entries are numerous, of course it takes time to judge them. In such a class as the fox-terriers, which is extremely large at Birmingham—this year it being no less than 127, and many of the animals being very evenly balanced—it is anything but an easy task ; but with all this, judges



generally manage to spot the right animals. It does not follow that sporting dogs who gain a prize at a show are any good for the field. Many first-prize dogs are utterly useless for it, never having been broken: and, if they had, might perhaps have turned out worthless. Dogs of the first breed are often gun-shy, want nose, face, method of range, will not back or stand, and are otherwise utterly unmanageable. It is not every dog that breaks well; not one in ten makes what is called a first-class animal. All judges can do, when the dogs are led from their benches, is to give prizes to those who come up to the standard in head, shape, strength, colour, and general goodness of formation.

At some shows judging in public is the fashion; but this is a very great mistake, and has been proved to be so time after time. Judges should be quite to themselves when they are giving their awards; and not have a crowd around them making their remarks, which are sometimes anything but flattering. A dog, to win at such a show as Birmingham, must not only be handsome, but he must go up in good coat and in the pink of condition.

Having now given a general outline of the Birmingham Dog Show from its commencement, I will turn to the show itself for this year. Take it

altogether, it has been the most successful one that has yet taken place ; and when in Class 3, bloodhounds (dogs), the following prices are attached to them, perhaps all readers may form some idea how the owners value their animals :—Rival, £500; Brutus, £1000; Baron, £1050; Draco, £10,000,000,000. Of course these prices are only put against them to show they are not for sale. Another, by the same owner as Draco, was merely £10,000. So highly are stock dogs and breeding bitches valued, that it is simply impossible to get them ; and it is very rarely the best pups are sold, and if they are, at an enormous price.

Altogether, there were 103 classes, so it will be impossible for me to notice all ; in fact, I must leave the non-sporting classes, and confine myself to pointers, setters, spaniels, and retrievers.

I will take three gentlemen who sent heavy entries :—Mr Price of Rhiwlas, Bala, North Wales, had fourteen entries, comprising 1 fox-terrier, 6 pointers, 1 setter, 2 retrievers, 1 spaniel, 1 sheep-dog, 1 Dalmatian and 1 bull-dog. He only got with these, two first prizes, one commended, and five highly commended. Notwithstanding all the puff and long pedigrees given by this gentleman in the catalogues, it will be seen he did not do very much. Two of the highly commended ones, Ginx's



Baby, and a dog with an unwriteable name, were bred by Mr Purcell Llewellyn, who has three more of the same litter in his kennel far superior to these. His pointer bitch, Belle, was absent, but in her place was a large photograph—another species of puff. The bitch is not A 1, being a soft, tiring animal. In the catalogue she appears with £10,000,000,000 as her price. Take away the figure 1, and we should then get at her right value. As regards his old setter, Regent, who took a first in Class 34, it is an incomprehensible bit of judgment; for Mr Llewellyn's eleven months old, Flame, was the best in the class, far away. I am forced to admit that the Rhiwlas kennel is but a second-rate one. Mr Purcell Llewellyn had eight entries, one absent (Nellie). None of his dogs were in feather, yet so good are they that out of the seven who represented him six were to the fore—two first prizes, one second prize, and three highly commended. This is something like form. Prince took the first in the Champion Class. He is, without doubt, the handsomest headed setter in England, and the Champion Countess not only very beautiful, but *the best in the field*. Prince won at the Crystal Palace this year, taking champion prize and extra cup — the same at Birmingham in 1872 and 1873; first prize and

extra cup at the Crystal Palace in 1872 ; at Birmingham in 1871 and 1872, first prize and extra cup. He has never been shown anywhere else, and has never been beaten. Countess, the nonpareil, though out of feather, was in good muscle and condition, and beat Mr Dickens's celebrated Belle. Countess has only been exhibited four times—at the Crystal Palace and Birmingham—has won each time and never been beaten. Take her altogether she is *the* setter of England.

Mr Whitehouse of Ipsley Court, Warwickshire, had an entry of twelve—11 pointers and 1 retriever. Out of these there were three first prizes, one second, one highly commended, and one commended. It will thus be seen that, as breeders, both Mr Whitehouse, for pointers, and Mr Purcell Llewellyn, for setters, are far before Mr Price—and will be, for his animals are not up to the mark. Mr Thomas Smith of the Grange, Tettenhall, Wolverhampton, had a grand entry of ten ; and he spotted three first prizes and one commended. Take the setters all through, they were very good.

The black-and-tan setters in Class 37 (dogs) were good ; but in Class 38 (bitches) were still better.



Class 39, setters (Irish dogs), was good. Curiously enough, there was exactly the same entry this year as last, viz., 14. Mr Stone, with Dash, spotted the first prize; Mr Purcell Llewellyn, the second with Kite, V.H.C. with Kimo, and three others got V.H.C.

In 1872 the entry for Class 40, setters (Irish bitches), was 10; this year it was only 8; but they were the best lot that have ever been shown at the Hall, and so highly were they thought of by the judges that every one in the class was highly commended. Here three gentlemen, probably the best breeders of the Irish setter we have, contended, viz.:—Captains Cooper and Allaway and Mr Purcell Llewellyn. Captain Cooper exhibited three, Captain Allaway one, Mr Llewellyn one; but the first prize fell to neither of these gentlemen, Mr Jephson beating them on the post with Lilly II., and Captain Cooper running a good second with Eilie; though neither were bred by the same gentleman, yet each was two years and four months old.

There were 78 entries for retrievers. For the best in all classes (curly-coated), Mr Morris took it with True; he also secured the Champion Class Bitches (curly-coated) with X L; second prize in Class 43 with Marquis; highly commended in same class with Monarch; first prize in Class 44 with

Moretta. So with an entry of six he secured three first prizes, one second, and one highly commended—good form indeed.

My old friend Mr Gorse, one of our very best breeders, took the champion prize in smooth or wavy-coated dogs with Sailor, four years old; and a fine animal he is. The spaniels were 82 entries, and some very good ones, too, there were among them. Classes 55 and 56 were capital. Better have never been seen at Curzon Hall.

The greyhounds were a poor lot. It is not the time of year for hounds or greyhounds, as they are all at work.

The non-sporting and toy classes were well represented. And it was amusing to see the excitement and hear the exclamations of some of the ladies on looking at the cages which held these beautiful little animals.

I have often thought how much better it would be if ladies, or others who want dogs, instead of sending to a London dealer, who is almost sure to “do” them, were to attend such shows as Birmingham, the Crystal Palace, or Nottingham. There you can pick out what you want—always remembering you must give a good price for a good article. But, then, if you intend to exhibit, and you have a good animal, it will soon pay itself; and



if you breed, the pups will see your money back.

Good as the other exhibitions have been at Birmingham, this must be considered the best; and with an entry of 944 against 911 of last year.

At the time of writing this—the 3rd December—I have seen no letters from disappointed exhibitors or others. But then, “Bell’s Life,” “Land and Water,” and THE Authority (*query*) have not yet appeared.

The “Times,” however, for the 2nd December, says it was a most capital show.

Both Mr Murchison and the Rev. Mr Tennison Mosse were conspicuous by their absence, but I hope to see them to the fore again at the Crystal Palace Show, with their unapproachable fox and Dandie Dinmont terriers. Talking of fox-terriers, I have overlooked them. Not only was the entry a grand one (127), but the quality was good too. I love the terrier, for he is a sporting little dog, no matter what breed; but the fox-terrier is the favourite, if one may judge from the entries. But why other terriers, such as smooth-haired, black-and-tan, Skye, drop-eared, and others, Dandie Dinmont, broken-haired, wire-haired, and Bedlington should not be included in the sporting classes, I have ever been at a loss to imagine. There is

no better terrier exists to drive heavy gorse for rabbits than the Dandie Dinmont. He is the gamest of the game, and no cover, however thick, will stop him. Mr Wootton of Mapperley, near Nottingham, has a magnificent breed of wire-haired terriers, the best in England. For this class (92), there were twelve entries ; but Mr Wootton skinned the lamb, taking first and second prizes with Venture and Tip, and the highly commended Spot being bred by him.

Whatever sort of terrier Mr Wootton has, you may be sure of one thing—that it is the right sort.

I confess to a *penchant* for the wire-haired terrier, rather than the fox-terrier, for the latter are now bred very soft and delicate—there is too much Italian greyhound in them for me. Of course I am speaking generally. Give me, if I must have fox-terriers, hard ones, such as Old Jock was—something that will stand wet and cold, the cut-and-come-again sort.

One thing I sincerely hope will be done away with next year at Birmingham, viz.:—the photographic dodge of advertisement, as was the case with Mr Price's Belle. It is quite wearying enough to inflict his long-winded pedigrees on the public, without the picture puff; and I trust the



committee will see the necessity of putting a stop to this, or in a few years Curzon Hall will be turned into a photographic gallery instead of a dog show, which I hardly think would be pleasing to the visitors.

The next dog show of any importance will be at the Crystal Palace, held from June 9th to the 12th. It is to be hoped that the judges this year will be properly selected; but as it is to be held under the auspices of the Kennel Club, I suppose none but their own clique will officiate. But let me hope they will see the folly of such a course, and that they will select judges that do not belong to their association—then the public will have confidence, which they will not if *members of the club exhibit, and members of the club adjudicate.*

## HUNTINGCROP HALL.

“REPUTATION ! Reputation ! oh, I have lost my reputation !” It was, I believe, one Michael Cassio, a Florentine, who originally made the remark ; and I can only say I sincerely wish I were in Michael Cassio’s position, and could lose mine. It may be a “bubble,” this same reputation ; indeed, we have high authority for so terming it : but “bubble” rhymes with “trouble,” and that is the condition to which such a reputation as mine is apt to bring you ; for it supposes me to be a regular Nimrod, whereas I know about as much of the science of the chase as my supposititious prototype probably knew of ballooning : it sets me down as being “at home in the saddle ;” whereas it is there that I am, if I may be allowed the expression, utterly at sea.

When, last November, I was seated before a blazing fire in Major Huntingcrop’s town house, and his too charming daughter, Laura, expressed her enthusiastic admiration for hunting, and everything connected with it—mildly at the same time hinting her contempt for those who were unskilled in the



accomplishment—could I possibly admit that I was amongst the despised class? Was it not rather a favourable opportunity for showing our community of sentiment by vowing that the sport was the delight of my life, and firing off a few sentences laden with such sporting phraseology as I had happened to pick up in the course of desultory reading?

Laura listened with evident admiration. I waxed eloquent. My arm-chair would not take the bit between its teeth and run away; no hounds were in the neighbourhood to test my prowess; and I am grieved to admit that for a fearful ten minutes “the father of —— stories” (what a family he must have!) had it all his own way with me.

“*Atra cura sedet post equitem* indeed!” I concluded. “You may depend upon it, Miss Huntingcrop, that man was mounted on a screw! Black Care would never dare to intrude his unwelcome presence on a galloper. Besides, why didn’t the fellow put his horse at a hurdle? Probably Black Care wouldn’t have been able to sit a fence. But I quite agree with you that it is the *duty* of a gentleman to hunt; and I only wish that the performance of some of my other duties gave me half as much pleasure!”

Where I should have ended it is impossible to say; but here our *tête-à-tête* was interrupted by the

advent of the Major, who heard the tag end of my panegyric with manifest delight.

“Huntingcrop is the place for you, Mr Smoothley,” said he, with enthusiasm, “and I shall be more than pleased to see you there. I think, too, we shall be able to show you some of your favourite sport this season. We meet four days a week, and you may reckon on at least one day with the Grassmere. It is always a sincere pleasure to me to find a young fellow whose heart is in it.”

As regards my heart, it was in my boots at the prospect; and, despite the great temptation of Laura’s presence, I paused, carefully to consider the *pros* and *cons* before accepting.

How pleasant to see her fresh face every morning at the breakfast-table—how unpleasant to see a horse—most likely painfully fresh also—waiting to bear me on a fearsome journey as soon as the meal was concluded! How delightful to feel the soft pressure of her fingers as she gave me morning greeting: how awful to feel my own fingers numbed and stiff with tugging at the bridle of a wild, tearing, unmanageable steed! How enjoyable to——

“Are you engaged for Christmas, Mr Smoothley?” Laura inquired, and that query settled me. It might freeze—I could sprain my ankle, or knock





"I unceasingly studied the works of Major Whyte-Melville, and endeavoured to get up a little enthusiasm."—*Page 271.*





up an excuse of some sort. Yes, I would go ; and might good luck go with me.

For the next few days I unceasingly studied the works of Major Whyte-Melville, and others who have most to say on what they term sport, and endeavoured to get up a little enthusiasm. I did get up a little—*very* little ; but when the desired quality had made its appearance, attracted by my authors' wizard-like power, it was of an extremely spurious character, and entirely evaporated when I arrived at the little railway station nearest to the Hall. A particularly neat groom, whom I recognised as having been in town with the Huntingcrops, was awaiting me in a dogcart, and the conveyance was just starting when we met a string of horses, hooded and sheeted, passing along the road : in training, if I might be permitted to judge from their actions, for the wildest scenes in "Mazeppa," "Dick Turpin," or some other exciting equestrian drama. I did not want the man to tell me that they were his master's : I knew it at once ; and the answers he made to my questions as to their usual demeanour in the field plunged me into an abyss of despair.

The hearty welcome of the Major, the more subdued but equally inspiriting greeting of his daughter, and the contagious cheerfulness of a house full of

pleasant people, in some measure restored me ; but it was not until the soothing influence of dinner had taken possession of my bosom, and a whisper had run through the establishment that it was beginning to freeze, that I thoroughly recovered my equanimity, and was able to retire to rest with some small hope that my bed next night would not be one of pain and suffering.

Alas for my anticipations ! I was awakened from slumber by a knock at the door, and the man entered my room with a can of hot water in one hand and a pair of tops in the other ; while over his arm were slung my—in point of fact, my breeches ; a costume which I had never worn except on the day it came home, when I spent the greater portion of the evening sportingly arrayed astride of a chair, to see how it all felt.

“ Breakfast at nine, sir. Hounds meet at Blackbrook at half-past ten ; and it’s a good way to ride,” said the servant.

“ The frost’s all gone, I fea—— I hope ? ” I said, inquiringly.

“ Yes, sir. Lovely morning ! ” he answered, drawing up the blinds.

In his opinion a lovely morning was characterised by slightly damp, muggy weather ; in mine it would have been a daybreak of ultra-Siberian intensity.



I ruefully dressed, lamenting that my will was not a little stronger (nor were thoughts of my other will—and testament—entirely absent), that I might have fled from the trial, or done something to rescue myself from the exposure which I felt must shortly overwhelm me. The levity of the men in the breakfast-room was a source of suffering to me, and even Laura's voice jarred on my ears as she petitioned her father to let her follow "just a little way"—she was going to ride and see the hounds "throw off," a ceremony which I devoutly hoped would be confined to those animals—"because it was *too* hard to turn back when the real enjoyment commenced; and she would be good in the pony-carriage for the rest of the week."

"No, no, my dear," replied the Major; "women are out of place in the hunting field. Don't you think so, Mr Smoothley?"

"I do, indeed, Major," I answered, giving Laura's little dog under the table a fearful kick as I threw out my foot violently to straighten a crease which was severely galling the inside of my left knee. "You had far better go for a quiet ride, Miss Huntingcrop, and"—how sincerely I added—"I shall be delighted to accompany you; there will be plenty of days for me to hunt when you drive to the meet."

“No, no, Smoothley. It’s very kind of you to propose it, but I won’t have you sacrificing your day’s pleasure,” the Major made answer, dashing the crumbs of hope from my hungry lips. “You may go a little way, Laura, if you’ll promise to stay with Sir William, and do all that he tells you. You won’t mind looking after her, Heathertopper?”

Old Sir William’s build would have forbidden the supposition that he was in any way given to activity, even if the stolidity of his countenance had not assured you that caution was in the habit of marking his guarded way; and he made suitable response. I was just debating internally as to the least circuitous mode by which I could send myself a telegram, requiring my immediate presence in town, when a sound of hoofs informed us that the horses were approaching; and gazing anxiously from the window before me, which overlooked the drive in front of the house, I noted their arrival.

Now the horse is an animal which I have always been taught to admire. A “noble animal” he is termed by zoologists, and I am perfectly willing to admit his nobility when he conducts himself with reticence and moderation; but when he gyrates like a teetotum on his hind legs, and wildly spars at the groom he ought to respect, I cease to recog-





"Gazing anxiously from the window before me, I noted the arrival of the horses. Laura hastened to the window. 'You pretty darlings!' she rapturously exclaimed."—*Pages 274-5.*





nise any qualities in him but the lowest and most degrading.

Laura hastened to the window, and I rose from the table and followed her.

“ You pretty darlings ! ” she rapturously exclaimed. “ Oh ! are you going to ride The Sultan, Mr Smoothley ? How nice ! I do so want to, but papa won’t let me.”

“ No, my dear ; he’s not the sort of horse for little girls to ride ;—but he’ll suit you, Smoothley ; he’ll suit you, I know.”

Without expressing a like confidence, I asked, “ Is that the Sultan ? ” pointing to a large chestnut animal at that moment in the attitude which, in a dog, is termed “ begging.”

“ Yes ; a picture, isn’t he ? Look at his legs. Clean as a foal’s ! Good quarters—well ribbed up—not like one of the waspy greyhounds they call thoroughbred horses now-a-days. Look at his condition, too ; I’ve kept that up pretty well, though he’s been out of training for some time,” cried the Major.

“ He’s not a racehorse, is he ? ” I nervously asked.

“ He’s done a good deal of steeplechasing, and ran once or twice in the early part of this season. It makes a horse rush his fences rather, perhaps ; but you young fellows like that, I know.”

“His——eye appears slightly blood-shot, doesn’t it?” I hazarded; for he was exhibiting a large amount of what I imagine should have been white, in an unsuccessful attempt to look at his tail without turning his head round. “Is he quiet with hounds?”

“Playful—a little playful,” was his not assuring reply. “But we must be off, gentlemen. It’s three miles to Blackbrook, and it won’t do to be late!” And he led the way to the Hall, where I selected my virgin whip from the rack, and swallowing a nip of orange-brandy, which a servant providentially handed to me at that moment, went forth to meet my fate.

Laura, declining offers of assistance from the crowd of pink-coated young gentlemen who were sucking cigars in the porch, was put into the saddle by her own groom. I think she looked to me for aid, but I was constrained to stare studiously in the opposite direction, having a very vague idea of the method by which young ladies are placed in their saddles. Then I commenced, and ultimately effected, the ascent of *The Sultan*: a process which appeared to me precisely identical with climbing to the deck of a man-of-war.

“Stirrups all right, sir?” asked the groom.

“This one’s rather too long.—No, it’s the *other*



one, I think." One of them didn't seem right, but it was impossible to say which in the agony of the moment.

He surveyed me critically from the front, and then took up one stirrup to a degree that brought my knee into close proximity with my waistcoat: The Sultan meanwhile exhibiting an uncertainty of temperament which caused me very considerable anxiety. Luckily I had presence of mind to say that he had shortened the leather too much, and there was not much difference between the two, when, with Laura and some seven companions, I started down the avenue in front of the house.

The fundamental principles of horsemanship are three: keep your heels down; stick in your knees; and try to look as if you liked it. So I am informed, and I am at a loss to say which of the three is the most difficult of execution. The fact that The Sultan started jerkily, some little time before I was ready to begin, thereby considerably deranging such plans as I was forming for guidance, is to be deplored; for my hat was not on very firmly, and it was extremely awkward to find a hand to restore it to its place when it displayed a tendency to come over my eyes. Conversation, under these circumstances, is peculiarly difficult; and I fear that Laura found my remarks some-

what curt and strangely punctuated. The Sultan's behaviour, however, had become meritorious to a high degree ; and I was just beginning to think that hunting was not so many degrees worse than the treadmill, when we approached the scene of action.

Before us, as we rounded a turning in the road, a group of some thirty horsemen—to which fresh accessions were constantly being made—chatted together and watched a hilly descent to the right down which the pack of hounds, escorted by several officials, was approaching. The Major and his party were cordially greeted, and no doubt like civilities would have been extended to me had I been in a position to receive them ; but, unfortunately, I was not ; for, on seeing the hounds, the “playfulness” of The Sultan vigorously manifested itself, and he commenced a series of gymnastic exercises to which his previous performances had been a mere farce. I lost my head, but mysteriously kept what was more important—my seat, until the tempest of his playfulness had in some measure abated ; and then he stood still, shaking with excitement. I sat still, shaking—from other causes.

“Keep your horse's head to the hounds, will you, sir ?” was the salutation which the master bestowed on me, cantering up as the pack defiled through a gate ; and indeed The Sultan seemed



anxious to kill a hound or two to begin with. "Infernal Cockney!" was, I fancy, the term of endearment he used as he rode on; but I don't think Laura caught any of this short but forcible utterance, for just at this moment a cry was raised in the wood to the left, and the men charged through the gate and along the narrow cart-track with a wild rush. Again The Sultan urged on his wild career—half-breaking my leg against the gatepost, as I was very courteously endeavouring to get out of the way of an irascible gentleman behind me, who appeared to be in a hurry, and then plunging me into the midst of a struggling pushing throng of men and horses.

If the other noble sportsmen were not enjoying themselves more than I, it was certainly a pity that they had not stayed at home. Where was this going to end? and—but what was the matter in front? They paused, and then suddenly all turned round and charged back along the narrow path. I was taken by surprise, and got out of the way as best I could, pulling my horse back amongst the trees, and the whole cavalcade rushed past me. Out of the wood; across the road; over the opposite hedge, most of them—some turn off towards a gate to the right—and away up the rise beyond; passing over which they were soon out of sight.

That The Sultan's efforts to follow them had been vigorous I need not say; but I felt that it was a moment for action, and pulled and tagged and sawed at his mouth to make him keep his head turned away from temptation. He struggled about amongst the trees, and I felt that, under the circumstances, I should be justified in hitting him on the head. I did so; and shortly afterwards—it was not exactly that I was *thrown*, but circumstances induced me to *get off* rather suddenly.

My foot was on my native heath. I was alone, appreciating the charms of solitude in a degree I had never before experienced; but after a few minutes of thankfulness, the necessity of action forced itself on my mind. Clearly, I must not be seen standing at my horse's head gazing smilingly at the prospect—that would never do, for the whole hunt might reappear as quickly as they had gone; so, smoothing out the most troublesome creases in my nether garments, I proceeded to mount. I say “proceeded,” for it was a difficult and very gradual operation, but was eventually managed through the instrumentality of a little boy, who held The Sultan's head, and addressed him in a series of forcible epithets that I should never have dared to use: language, however, which, though reprehensible from a moral point of view,





"I proceeded to mount. I say proceeded, for it was a difficult and very gradual operation, but was eventually managed through the instrumentality of a little boy, who held The Sultan's head, and addressed him in a series of forcible epithets that I should never have dared to use."  
—Page 280.





seemed to appeal to the animal's feelings, and to be successful.

He danced a good deal when I was once more on his back, and seemed to like going in a series of small bounds, which were peculiarly irritating to sit. But I did not so much mind now, for no critical eye was near to watch my hand wandering to the convenient pommel, or to note my taking such other little precautions as the exigencies of the situation, and the necessity for carrying out the first law of nature, seemed to suggest.

Hunting, in this way, wasn't really so very bad. There did not appear to be so very much danger, the morning air was refreshing and pleasant, and the country looked bright. There always seemed to be a gate to each field, which, though troublesome to open at first, ultimately yielded to patience and perseverance and the handle of my whip. I might get home safely after all; and as for my desertion, where everyone was looking after himself, it was scarcely likely they could have observed my defection. No; this was not altogether bad fun. I could say with truth for the rest of my life that I "had hunted." It would add a zest to the perusal of sporting literature, and, above all, extend the range of my charity by making me sincerely appreciate men who really rode.

But alas! though clear of the trees practically, I was, metaphorically, very far from being out of the wood. When just endeavouring to make up my mind to come out again some day, I heard a noise, and, looking behind me, saw the whole fearful concourse rapidly approaching the hedge which led into the ploughed field next to me on the right. Helter-skelter, on they came! Hounds popping through, and scrambling over. Then a man in pink topping the fence, and on again over the plough; then one in black over with a rush; two, three, four more in different places. Another by himself who came up rapidly, and, parting company with his horse, shot over like a rocket!

All this I noted in a second. There was no time to watch, for The Sultan had seen the opportunity of making up for his lost day, and started off with the rush of an express train. We flew over the field; neared the fence. I was shot into the air like a shuttlecock from a battledore—a moment of dread—then, a fearful shock which landed me lopsidedly, somewhere on the animal's neck. He gives a spring which shakes me into the saddle again, and is tearing over the grass field beyond. I am conscious that I am in the same field as the Major, and some three or four other men. We fly on at frightful speed—there is





"An agony of semi-unconsciousness—a splash, a fearful splash—a struggle. . . . I am on his back, somewhere in the neighbourhood of the saddle; without stirrups, but grimly clutching a confused mass of reins as The Sultan gently canters up the ascent to where the hounds are howling."—*Page 283.*





a line of willows in front of us which we are rapidly nearing. It means water, I know. We get—or rather *it comes* nearer—nearer—nearer—ah-h-h! An agony of semi-unconsciousness—a splash, a fearful splash—a struggle . . .

I am on his back, somewhere in the neighbourhood of the saddle: without stirrups, but grimly clutching a confused mass of reins as The Sultan gently canters up the ascent to where the hounds are howling and barking round a man in pink, who waves something brown in the air before throwing it to them. I have no sooner reached the group than the master arrives, followed by some four or five men, conspicuous among whom is the Major.

He hastens to me. To denounce me as an impostor? Have I done anything wrong, or injured the horse?

“I congratulate you, Smoothley,—I congratulate you! I promised you a run, and you’ve had one, and, by Jove! taken the shine out of some of us. My Lord”—to the master—“let me present my friend, Mr Smoothley, to you. Did you see him take the water? You and I made for the Narrows, but he didn’t turn away, and went at it as if Sousemere were a puddle. Eighteen feet of water if it’s an inch, and with such a take-off and such a landing, there’s not a man in the hunt who’d

attempt it ! Well, Heathertopper ! Laura, my dear,"—for she and the bulky Baronet at this moment arrived at the head of a straggling detachment of followers—"you missed a treat in not seeing Smoothley charge the brook :

‘ Down in the hollow there, sluggish and idle,  
Runs the dark stream where the willow trees grow,  
Harden your heart, and catch hold of your bridle—  
Steady him—rouse him—and over we go !’

Isn't that it ? It was beautiful ? ”

It might have been in his opinion : in mine it was simply an act of unconscious insanity, which I had rather die than intentionally repeat.

“ I didn't see you all the time, Mr Smoothley ; where were you ? ” Laura asked.

“ Where was he ? ” cried the Major. “ Not following you, my dear. He took his own line, and, by Jove ! it was a right one ! ”

It was not in these terms that I had expected to hear the Major addressing me, and it was rather bewildering. Still I trust that I was not puffed up with an unseemly vanity as Laura rode back by my side. She looked lovely with the flush of exercise on her cheek, and the sparkle of excitement in her eyes ; and as we passed homewards through the quiet country lanes I forgot the painful creases that were afflicting me, and with as much eloquence





"I trust I was not puffed up with an unseemly vanity, as Laura rode back by my side. . . 'You are so rash and daring,' she says softly, 'that I should never be happy when you were out.'"—*Pages 284-5.*





as was compatible with the motion of my steed—I ventured !

The blushes deepen on her cheek. She consents on one condition : I must give up hunting.

“ You are so rash and daring,” she says, softly—*very* softly, “ that I should never be happy when you were out.”

Can I refuse her anything—even *this* ? Impossible !

I promise : vowing fervently to myself to keep my word ; and on no account do anything to increase the reputation I made at Huntingcrop Hall.

## A DOG HUNT ON THE BERWYNS

THANKS to the columns of the sporting papers, every Englishman, whatever his occupation, is sufficiently familiar with the details of fox-hunting, and all other kinds of hunting usually practised in merry England; but few, I fancy, have either seen or heard of a dog-hunt. It has fallen to my lot to participate in such a hunt; one, too, which was quite as exciting as a wolf-hunt must have been in the olden time, or as that most glorious of sports, otter-hunting, is now. Imagine to yourself a three days' chase after a fierce and savage dog, a confirmed sheep worrier, and that in the midst of the picturesque ruggedness and grandeur of the Welsh hills.

Some three or four miles east from Bala, the Berwyn Mountains raise their heathery summits in the midst of a solitude broken only by the plaintive bleat of a lost sheep or the shouts of men in search of it.

For miles the purple moorland rolls on without a moving creature to break the stillness. Deep



ravines run down on either hand through green, ferny sheep-walks, dotted with innumerable sheep. These ravines in winter time, when the snow lies deep on the hills, are, when not frost-bound, roaring torrents. In the summer, huge blocks of stone are scattered about in strange confusion, and a tiny stream can scarcely find its way between them. Lower down still can be seen, here and there, a farm-house, in some sheltered glen, kept green all the year round by the trickling moisture. Further off still, in the valleys, are villages and hamlets tenanted by hardy Welsh sheep-farmers and dealers.

In the least-exposed corners of the sheep-walks are folds built of loose, unmortared stones, in which the sheep huddle to find shelter from the fury of the frequent storms which sweep over the mountains.

As the wealth of the hill farmers consists chiefly of sheep, if a dog once takes to worrying them, he is either kept in durance vile, or killed. The habit once acquired is never got rid of; and after a sheep-dog has once tasted blood, it becomes practically useless to the farmer. The quantity of sheep that can be killed by such a dog in a short time is almost incredible.

It may be imagined, therefore, with what feelings

the Berwyn farmers heard of sheep after sheep being killed on their own and neighbouring farms, by a dog which nobody owned, and which ran loose on the mountains catering for itself. Descending from the lonelier parts of the hills, it would visit the sheep-walks and kill, as it appeared, for the pure love of killing; in most cases leaving the mangled bodies on the spot.

Month after month ran by, and it still eluded the vengeance of the indignant hillmen. The most exaggerated accounts were current respecting its size and ferocity. No two versions agreed as to its colour, though all gave it enormous size. As it afterwards turned out, it was a black and white foxhound bitch.

Everybody carried a gun, but on the few occasions that the dog came within shot, it appeared to be shot proof. The loss of numerous sheep was becoming serious; in some instances the farmers suffered heavily. It was the staple topic of conversation. From time to time, paragraphs, such as the following, appeared in the papers published in the neighbouring towns:—

“THE RAPACIOUS DOG.—The noted sheep destroyer on the Berwyn hills still continues to commit his depredations, in spite of all efforts to kill him.



“The last that was seen of him was on Sunday morning, by Mr Jones on the Syria sheep-walk, when the dog was in the act of killing a lamb. Mr Jones was armed with a gun at the time, and tried to get within gunshot range; but it seems that the animal can scent a man approaching him from a long distance, so he made off immediately. After it became known to the farmers and inhabitants of Llandrillo that he had been seen, a large party went up to the mountain at once, and were on the hills all day, but nothing more was heard of him till late in the evening, when he was again seen on Hendwr sheep-walk, and again entirely lost. On Monday a number of foxhounds were expected from Tanybwlech, and if a sight of him can be obtained, no doubt he will be hunted down and captured, and receive what he is fully entitled to—capital punishment.”

On a bright May morning, five months after the first appearance of the sheep-destroyer, a pack, consisting of a dozen couple of fox-dogs, with their huntsman, started up the lane from Llandderfel to the hills, followed by a motley crowd of farmers and labourers, armed with guns and sticks, and numbering many horsemen.

Up the lane till the hedges gave place to loose stone walls, higher still till the stone walls dis-

appeared, and the lane became a track, and then a lad came leaping down the hill, almost breathless, with the news that the dog had been seen on a hill some six miles away.

Up the mountain, down the other side, up hill after hill, following the sheep-tracks, the cavalcade proceeded, until we reached the spot where our quarry had been last seen. A line of beaters was formed across the bottom of a glen, and proceeded up the hill. Up above was Dolydd Ceriog, the source of the Ceriog, which came through a rent in the moorland above.

A wilder scene could not be imagined. On either side the hills rose up, until their peaks were sharply defined against the blue. The steep sides were covered with gorse and fern, with fantastic forms of rock peering through. At the bottom the infant Ceriog eddied and rushed over and among rocks of every shape and size, forming the most picturesque waterfalls. In front up the ravine the numerous cascades leaped and glittered, growing smaller and smaller, until the purple belt of moorland was reached.

The hounds quartered to and fro, and the men shouted in Welsh and English. The hardy Welsh horses picked their way unerringly over the *débris*.

“Yonder he is,” was the cry, as up sprang the



chase a hundred yards ahead. From stone to stone, from crag to crag, through the water, through the furze and fern fled the dog, and the foxhounds catching sight and scent, followed fast. At first they gained, but when the pursued dog found it was terrible earnest for her, she laid herself well to her work—mute.

Startled by the unusual noise, the paired grouse flew whirring away. The sheep were scattered in confusion, and a raven flew slowly away from a carcase. Upward still we went, the footmen having the best of it on the uneven ground—

“Upward still to wilder, lonelier regions,  
Where the patient river fills its urn  
From the oozy moorlands, 'mid the boulders ;  
Cushioned deep in moss, and fringed with fern.”

Now the hounds are over the crest, and soon we followed them. We now had the bogs to contend with, worse enemies than the rocks.

“Diawl ! John Jones, I am fast,” we heard and saw an unfortunate pony up to its belly in the bog. Another stumbles in a crevice and sends its rider headlong. We footmen have still the best of it, although it is no easy matter to run through the heather.

We had now reached the other side of the mountain, and were fast descending into the valley

of the Dee. There seemed a probability of our catching the quarry here; but no, she left the heather—much to my relief, it must be confessed—and made for the valley, past a farm; now well in advance of her pursuers; over the meadows; then, for a short distance, along the Bala and Corwen line. Then past Cynwyd village, where the crowd of people, and the various missiles sent after her, failed to stop her. Then through the churchyard, and along the road for some distance.

Here a man breaking stones hurled his hammer at the bitch, but missed her.

Turning again, she made for the hills, running with unabated speed, although she had been hunted for nearly ten miles. The original pursuers had melted away, but we were reinforced by numbers of others.

Here I obtained a pony and set off again.

By this time the hounds were in full cry up the hillside. Mile after mile, over the hills we followed, now only by scent, as the dog had made good use of her time, while the hounds were hampered by people crossing the scent at the village.

“The shades of night were falling fast,” when we came to a brook flowing from the moorland. Here the scent was lost, and the wild dog was nowhere



to be seen. We held a council of war as to what was to be done. I was the only horseman present at first, but by-and-by the huntsman and others came up, bog-besmeared, and in a vicious frame of mind. We looked a queer group, as we sat in the light of some dead fern that somebody had kindled. Some were sitting on stones; others kneeling down, drinking from the brook; some whipping the tired dogs in, and others gesticulating wildly.

One thing was evident—nothing more could be done that evening; and the hounds were taken to their temporary home, to rest all the morrow, and resume the hunt on the day after.

On the morrow, from earliest dawn, messengers were coursing the glens in all directions, with invitations to people far and near to come and assist in the hunt. For myself, I was glad to rest my tired limbs. Although pretty well used to mountain work, I was quite done up; still, I resolved to see the end of the fun, and hired another pony.

The day after, the men kept pouring in to the place of rendezvous, till I was sure the majestic hills had never before witnessed such an assemblage. From far and near they came. Many, like myself, were mounted upon Welsh ponies. We commenced beating; and the Berwyns rang with the unearthly yells of the crowd. We reached

Cader Fronwen, one of the highest of the Berwyns, without meeting with a trace.

Here I was put *hors de combat* by my pony sticking fast in a bog; and as every one was too busy to help me, there I had to stay, and the hunt swept on. Soon the noise of the beaters died away, and I was left alone, sitting on a stone which peered out of the bog, holding the bridle of my unfortunate steed, and every now and then cutting heather and pushing it under its belly, to prevent the poor creature sinking any deeper into the mire. Here's a pretty fix, I thought.

Soon the mist which enveloped the summit of Cader Fronwen came sweeping down the gorge in a torrent of rain; and, even if my pony had been free, it would have been madness to stray from where I was, as I could not see two yards before me, and I did not know the paths.

By-and-by I heard them coming back, and then saw them looming gigantic in the mist. After having extricated my pony, as I was chilled and wet through, I made the best of my way to Llangynog, while the rest of the party—or multitude, rather—made for the Llanrhaiadr hills, but as I afterwards learnt, without success. Tired with a hard and long day's work, the men separated, and made off for their respective homes. No traces of



the dog had been found, although every likely hill had been well scoured.

Some of the people averred that the devil must be in the dog. The major part of the farmers believed that the savage animal had been frightened away, and most probably would not be met with again for some time. Acting under this conviction, the hounds were sent back by train the next morning.

The morrow was beautifully fine; and, little expecting that I should see the death of the sheep-worrier, I had gone for a ramble over the hills, armed with my geological hammer. I was sitting on a slab in an isolated quarry, watching the varying tints of the hillside, as shadow and sunshine coursed each other over the tender spring green of the grass, the darker green of the new fern, and the warm yellow-brown of last year's fronds, and admiring the contrast of the grey rocks angrily jutting out amidst the loveliness, and the whole crowned with the purple heather, rising above a narrow belt of mist, when a man, gun in hand, came clinking down the sloping rubbish, digging his heels in at each step, and excitedly told us—the two or three quarrymen and myself—that he had seen the dog lying on a rock about a mile away.

A boy was despatched to summon the neighbour-

ing farmers. In a very short space of time about fifty were on the spot, armed with guns of every conceivable make and age. Stealthily creeping up the hill, we were sent in different directions, so as to surround the sheep-walk where she lay.

In half an hour's time a gradually lessening circle was formed, all proceeding as silently as possible, and taking advantage of every tuft of fern or stunted thorn, so as to get as near as possible before arousing the sleeping dog.

There was a distance of about eighty yards between each man, when the brute rose up, and stretched herself, showing her white and glistening fangs.

Uttering a low growl as she became aware of her position, she set off in a long swinging gallop towards the heather. Just in that direction there appeared to be a man missing from the cordon, and a wide gap was left through which it seemed probable she would escape, and a storm of shouts arose. Just, however, as escape seemed certain, a sheet of flame poured out from behind a clump of thorn bushes and fern, and a loud report went reverberating over the glens. The dog's neck turned red, and she rolled over and over, uttering yelp after yelp in her agony. There was a miscellaneous charge from all sides. Crash came the butt-end of



the gun which had shot her on her body, with such force that the stock was splintered. Bang! bang! everybody tried to get a hit at her, even after she was dead.

When life was quite extinct we all gathered together, and a whoop of triumph awoke the echoes, startling the lapwings on the moorland.

As we marched down to the village we fired a volley in token of our success, and cheer after cheer told of the gladness with which it was welcomed by the villagers. The man who fired the lucky shot was carried through the streets of the village on the shoulders of two stout quarrymen, and the whole population gave themselves a holiday and made merry. A large subscription was started, and contributed to handsomely, in order to pay for the hounds and other expenses.

Upon examination the bitch was found to be branded on the left side with the letter "P;" so if any of my readers have lost such a dog, they will know what has become of it.

I do not suppose that a more exciting chase was ever witnessed since the old wolf-hunting days.

It may seem strange to many, as it did to me, that foxhounds should chase one of their own breed, but the fact remains that they did so.

## ON SOME ODD WAYS OF FISHING

BY THE AUTHOR OF "MOUNTAIN, MEADOW, AND MERE"

THE maxim that one half the world does not know how the other half lives may, with slight variation, be applied to the world of sportsmen. The "sportsman" is not of any particular class. The highest in the land and the lowest may rub against each other in the broad field of sport. This is peculiarly true as regards the gentle art. Wandering by the side of an unpreserved stream you may see my lord casting a fly over this shallow; and, twenty yards further down, Tinker Ben seated by the side of a chub hole watching his float circling round in the eddy, and as the noble passes the boor an honest angler's greeting may be interchanged, and a light for the latter's pipe asked for and given. It may be taken as a general rule that between anglers who pursue their sport by fair means there is a levelling freemasonry of the craft which is as pleasant as it is right.

Between the fair fisherman and the poacher, there



is, however, a broad line of demarcation—a line which bars the interchange of even the commonest civilities on the mutual ground of pursuing the same object. The fair fisherman hates the man who captures the finny tribe by unfair or illegal means as strongly as a foxhunter hates a foxkiller, or a strict sabbatarian hates a sinner who enjoys a Sunday afternoon's walk and the glimpses of nature it may afford him. There is also a line drawn between the man who fishes for amusement alone and he who fishes for profit. The division in the latter instance may not be so broad as it is in the former, but, nevertheless, it is wide enough to distinctly separate the two classes. Now I think the fair and amateur angler is in a great many instances unaware of the shifts and dodges adopted by the poacher and the pothunter to fill their pockets, and of the consequent hindrance to his own sport. Therefore by way of warning, of information, and possible amusement, I have noted down a few of the more singular instances which have come under my own observation.

Let anyone take a boat and row down the sluggish Yare from the dirty old city of Norwich as the shades of evening are darkening the river, and he will see several uncouth, rough-looking boats being slowly impelled down stream by

rougher looking men. He will notice that they have short, stout rods and poles in the boats, and if he watches them, he will presently see them take up their stations by the margin. Driving poles in the mud at the stems and sterns of their boats, the men make them fast ; and, taking their seats, proceed to “ bob ” for eels. A quantity of earthworms are strung on worsted, and, after being weighted, are suspended by a stout line from a short thick rod. The solitary fisherman holds one of these rods in each hand on each side of the boat, just feeling the bottom with the bait, and now and then pulling it up and shaking the eels, whose teeth get entangled in the worsted, into the boat. There he sits silent and uncommunicative, the greater part of the night and in all weathers, for the sake, perhaps, of, on the average, a shilling’s worth of eels each night. Altogether his berth must be a lonely one. His companions take their positions too far off to hold conversation with him, and the splash of a water-rat or the flaps of the canvas of a belated wherry and the cheery good-night of its steersman are the only sounds to beguile the tedium of his midnight watching.

Another mode of capturing eels is by “ eel picking ” in the lower waters of the Yare near Cantley. The man, armed with his eel spear, takes his stand



in the bows of his craft, and, stealing along by the edge of the reeds, plunges his spear at random in the mud. He uses his spear also as the means of propelling his tiny boat. I have seen four or five boats following each other along the side of the river in a queer-looking procession.

Those centres of interest to the angler—the Norfolk broads — are, alas! the strongholds of poaching. Norfolk anglers plead their great expanse of water as an excuse for “liggering” or trimmering to an enormous extent. Taking Norfolk anglers as a class, if they *can* “ligger” they will. The amount of destruction is something wonderful. The only time I ever yielded to the temptation of going with a friend “liggering,” I am thankful to say, we caught nothing, and I am not in a hurry to repeat the experiment. Yarrell gives an account of four days’ sport (?) at Heigham Sounds and Horsea, where in 1834, in the month of *March*, his informants caught in that space of time 256 pike weighing altogether 1135 lbs. What wonder that it is now difficult to get really good sport at these places with rod and line!

My favourite fish, the tench, has a bad habit of basking on the surface of some of these broads on hot summer’s days in weedy bays, where he deems himself perfectly secure. But the amphibious

Broadsman paddles quietly up to him, and actually scoops him out with his hand. You may touch his body with your hand and he shall not move, but if you touch his tail he darts away.

I have seen a somewhat similar thing in shallow pools in Shropshire. When the big carp come to the side to spawn, their bodies are half out of the water, and they may be approached and shovelled out with a spade. In the reeds adjoining a carp pool I once found a murderous instrument which was used by a gang of sawyers at work in the adjacent wood, for destroying the basking carp. It consisted of a large flat piece of wood, in which were set long nails like the teeth of a garden rake. This was attached to a long pole, and woe betide the unfortunate carp on whose back it descended.

Groping for trout in the shallow streams is a well-known amusement of country boys; but the dastardly and cruel practice of *liming* a brook is not now so often resorted to as it used to be. I have seen it done in a mountain brook, when, on account of my extreme youth, I have been powerless to prevent it, and the schoolboy notion of honour prevented my "peaching." A shovelful of quicklime is taken up the brook to some shallow ford, and then thrown into the water and triturated so that the stream carries it in a milk-white stream



downwards. In a short time the poachers follow it, and pick up the trout, which are floating dead on the surface, or swimming in circles on the top of the water, with scorched and blinded eyeballs. The lime penetrates into every crevice of the stream bed, and if it does not kill every trout within its range, it cruelly tortures all. I well remember the sickening sense of shame that crept over me as, an unwilling participator in the outrage, I crept over the mossy ground, when the noise made by every water-ouzel that took wing and every sheep that leaped down the hill side seemed to herald the approach of a keeper, with awful penalties of the law in his train.

Diverting the course of a brook, and emptying the pools of their water, and afterwards of their fish, is a long operation, and therefore not so frequently resorted to; but that poaching instrument called the twopole net I have known to clear many a nice little pool in a stream of its spotted denizens.

Do my readers know what a cleeching net is? It is in effect a magnified landing-net at the end of a long pole, and its use is to grab fish from under clumps of weed and overhanging banks. I once had one made for the purpose of catching bait, and a ludicrous incident occurred to a friend of mine who used it. He plunged it in too far from the

side where the water was deeper than he imagined, and the consequence was that he fell forward, his feet still on the bank, but his hands resting on the top of the pole within a foot of the water, into which he gradually subsided, in spite of our efforts to pull him back by the slack of his trousers. I have seen the cleeching net used in a very effective manner by bargees on canals. As their vessel is towed along, they put the net into the water alongside the bows, and walk back to the stern as the boat moves, so as to keep the net in the same position. The rush of the water, displaced by the passage of the barge, drives a good many fish into the net, and I have even known fair-sized pike to be captured in this way.

Once I was cruising down the Severn, and had moored the canoe under some bushes in a very secluded part of the river to take my midday rest. Presently I saw two men in coracles coming down the river. They stopped just opposite me, and commenced to net the river with a small meshed net. They paid the net out in a semi-circle, and then, beating the water with their paddles, they closed and completed the circle; and with their coracles side by side hauled their net in. It was a caution to see the fish they caught. Great chub of five, and one of nine pounds' weight, roach, pike,



and dace. In half an hour they had caught a great number. They looked rather frightened when I shot out from my hiding-place and examined their sport and the net.

I have not space to chat about setting night lines, in which art the Norfolk yachtsmen are no mean proficient; of smelting in the Yare; of netting the weedy pools in Cheshire with a flue net; of setting hoop nets for tench baited with a bunch of flowers or a brass candlestick, which attract the too curious fish; of eel bays and weirs, and the large eel nets set in the Bure from below Acle to Yarmouth; of leistering salmon and snaring pike; of casting nets used for unlawful purposes; of snatch-hooks and salmon roe, and other like deadly means of compassing the destruction of the finny tribe; but I fancy I have said enough to call to the angler's remembrance that his rod and line have formidable rivals, and that it behoves him to do all in his power to suppress and punish illegal and unfair sport.

## SHOOTING

THE 1st of September is a day more looked forward to by the general sporting public than any other. August 12th and October 1st may be eagerly anticipated by the wealthy sportsman, but September 1st is the day most generally looked forward to. Nor is the reason difficult to discover. Partridge-shooting is comparatively the cheapest of sports. So long as vermin is kept down by trapping, and the fields properly bushed in the season, to prevent the birds being netted, a fair number are sure to be found. There are few better or more exciting sports than partridge-driving. People who have never tried and those who have tried and failed, affect to despise it; but, in spite of all, it is an excellent sport, if only for the reason that all can join in it. The old and young, the weak and strong, and even ladies, honour the stands with their presence; though this cannot be said to add to the accuracy of the shooting, for partridge-driving arrangements are usually made so as to arrive at the first set of stands somewhere about eleven. Here the head-keeper is met, who,



after giving directions about watching particular lines, and begging that gentlemen will not put up their heads too soon, but keep down and "give the birds a chance," as he calls it, on the *lucus a non lucendo* principle, I suppose, mounts his old horse and trots off after the drivers, receiving, first of all, you may be sure, some chaff from the youngsters about his horse and his seat, to which he good-humouredly rejoins that "he hopes they will shoot better than he can ride."

The party now disperse to their several stands, each one accompanied by his loader, and, as you stroll down with your old loader, he greatly amuses you by his observations on the party and shrewd forecast of their respective powers. In a short time the distant sound of a horn is heard, which makes your old man break off his stories and reflections altogether, as he knows it is the signal for the line of drivers to start; you yourself peer eagerly through the screen, though really knowing that there is no chance of a shot for a long time yet. Presently a series of unearthly yells are heard, as some obstinate covey rises and breaks back over the drivers' heads. And here let me remark that the arrangement of a successful drive requires a great deal of forethought and knowledge; the wind and sun must be studied, and also the habits of the

birds. Partridges are thorough Tories, and like to take the same line that their fathers before them did, so it is useless to try to drive them far out of it.

Presently, as you are looking through the screen, a dark object comes into view that appears rather like a bumble bee; in another second you perceive it is an old cock French partridge, when, just as you are in the act of firing, down drops the bird, and commences running like a racehorse. Naturally you bring your gun down, but the old loader whispers, "Shoot un, sir, shoot un; he be the blarmed old cock, and mayhap, if you kills un, t'others will be obliged to fly;" so you pot him, and the cloud of feathers that comes out is wonderful. A novice would think that it was blown to bits; but the fact is, nothing of the kind has happened, the cloud being caused by the great thickness of plumage. It is very curious to shoot one in snow: the stream of feathers lying on it looks as if a small pillow had been ripped open.

Soon a distant cry of "Mark over!" showing that a covey has risen and is coming right for the stands, puts every one on the *qui vive*. Here they come straight for the man on the right, and you feel almost inclined to envy his chance, when suddenly the covey mount straight up like so many sky-rockets; your friend, fresh to the sport, has



put up his head just a minute or so too soon, and the birds saw him. Firing a hasty right and left as they pass over, he is greatly surprised at a bird falling nearly on the top of him, the fact being that the two he shot at were clean missed, but one of the hindmost of the covey flew into the shot. And now the scene begins to be very interesting; the birds are beginning to run out of the roots on to the large stubble in front, not by ones and twos, but by twenties at a time, the French birds of course being first. It is most curious to notice their dodges—how they run about looking for places to hide in, and when they discover the least shelter drop down into it at once; but you cannot spare much attention to them, as the coveys begin to rise thick and fast, and cries of “Mark over!” are incessant. The work now begins to be very exciting, and the fusillade kept up reminds one of the commencement of a general action, so sustained is it. Some of the younger hands, thoroughly overcome by the excitement of their first drive, are firing wildly, as if they thought they should not have a second chance. By way of contrast, look at the man stationed three or four stands from you, and see the machine-like regularity with which he knocks the birds over; no flurry of any sort, the gun brought up easily, the two sharp

reports, and a brace of birds tumbling; the empty piece handed to the loader, and the other gun taken and discharged in the same cool way with the like unfailing result. Both master and man are perfect specimens of their kind, the former as a shot and the latter as a loader. And now, as the drivers get further through the roots, the hares begin to bolt out, running wildly in every direction, utterly bewildered at the shouts and yells that greet them. Not many are shot at except by those who have utterly muffed the birds, and are anxious to show that they can hit something. Next, as the drivers come out on to the stubble, the French birds begin to get up by ones and twos. Many of these get off, for they rise from such queer places, often close to the stands.

The first drive being over, the head-keeper comes up to see the game collected, pausing by the stands of those who have been unlucky, and gravely telling their loaders that they "need not trouble to pick up their master's birds," as he always sees to that; whereupon very frequently the occupier tries to explain how the birds twisted or the sun was in his eyes, or makes one of the thousand excuses that men give for missing. The game being now collected, the party stroll off to the next set of stands, and the same thing goes on again, with the



exception that some of the excited sportsmen cool down a little, and, in consequence, improve in their shooting. Driving is the least fatiguing of any sport to the shooters, the drivers having to go such long rounds to their different starting-points that there is not the least need to hurry from stand to stand, but you can pick your way and go by the easiest route. The actual shooting, however, is difficult; it requires skill and coolness to get the exact knack of the thing. I well remember, after one drive, a man, who really was a remarkably good shot over dogs or walking up birds, coming to me with an expression of the greatest disgust on his face, and saying, "I have actually missed eight shots running!" However, he soon got into the way of it; but at first you do not discover the pace the birds go at, and are rather bothered by their coming right at you.

After a morning's driving very good sport can be got in the afternoon by going out with a couple of steady spaniels after the French partridges. You will find these birds have hidden themselves in the most wonderful places, under clods and small lumps of hedge-cuttings, in tufts of grass, holes by gate-posts; in fact, there is no telling where they may have got to. A rabbit-hole is a very favourite place; so if one of your dogs seems

inclined to stop and scratch at one, do not tell your keeper to "call the tiresome beast off," as he is always after rabbits, for it is ten to one that a Frenchman has taken refuge there. You will often find that the birds have got down almost to the end of the hole. However, they give capital sport, as they rise out of such unexpected places that you must always be ready for a shot. Besides the sport, it is an excellent way of keeping these "pests" down; for they really are "pests," driving about the English birds in the breeding season, and bothering your dogs awfully in the beginning of the shooting season by their habits of running; indeed, until driving commences, you hardly ever kill a Frenchman; but this is not much of a loss, as when they are shot they are not worth eating. One thing, you can send them away as presents to people who do not know their merits, and are very much pleased with them on account of their size and the beauty of their plumage, doubtless putting down their hardness and want of flavour to their cook!

But partridge-shooting *par excellence* is over dogs. It is a treat indeed to see a brace of well-broken pointers or setters at work: the speed with which they quarter their ground, and yet their perfect steadiness; to see the dog that finds the game stop dead in his gallop, limbs all rigid, as if he was



turned into stone, ears pricked and eyes almost starting out of his head with excitement; then his companion backing steadily, the attitude the same, but no eagerness shown; the rapid shots, and the dogs both down in an instant,—all this is delightful to witness, but is very seldom seen now-a-days. After the first week dogs are very little use, the birds will not lie to them; high farming, with its machine-cut stubbles, clean ploughs, and widely-drilled root-crops, has almost abolished shooting over dogs. The birds will not wait on the bare stubbles, and if you get them into roots, the rattle of the leaves when the dogs are at work is a signal for their flight. The only chance is where seeds have been sown in barley; then the reaping-machine cannot be set very low or it clogs, and in this there is fair lying; but as for the fine stubbles knee-high that our fathers enjoyed, and the broadcast turnips—why, they have gone, and pointers and setters have, alas, nearly disappeared with them.

When the birds have become so wild that they will not lie to the dogs at all, the best and most sportsmanlike way is to walk them up; but to do this with any success requires a man to be in excellent training. Walking over fallows deeply ploughed by steam-power is no joke, and the birds invariably select these. Your plan is to have about four guns

and five keepers or beaters, and take the fields in line, of course driving in the direction of any pieces of cole-seed, mustard, or roots that you may have on your ground; for when once the birds get into these, particularly into cole-seed, they will remain the rest of the day. It is surprising how many are bagged when walking: sometimes the coveys seem bothered by the line of men, and will rise within an easy shot; but they often seem to know by some sort of intuition the bad shot of the party, and will allow him to get fairly into the middle of them, when they rise with a rush, and fly off none the worse for his too hurried shots.

In this sport there is not half the firing to be heard which there is in "driving;" but the deadly single shot or the steady double is heard pretty regularly, and the bag at the end of the day is usually heavier. You commonly find that a very fair bag is made before entering the cole-seed or roots where the coveys have principally gone; but when this cover is entered, unless very unlucky, you may fairly reckon on the bag being doubled, for the birds cannot run much, and are forced to rise fairly, so that even a moderate shot ought to be pretty sure of his birds. One great advantage of this kind of shooting is that so few birds get away wounded; as a rule they are either dropped at once or get off



scot-free, whereas in "driving" an immense number go away wounded; and if there are any crows in the district, it is most curious to see them on the day after a "drive" hunting the fields regularly and systematically after the cripples.

There is still another method of partridge-shooting, but this mode is only adopted by wealthy cits, and brand-new peers. The keepers, with a strong force of beaters, are sent out to drive the birds into cover, and, when there, men are left as stops to keep the birds from straying out; then about twelve the party drive up in wagonettes, well wrapped up, and with plenty of foot-warmers, &c., to the nearest piece of cover, get out, take their guns, and walk right through it, blazing at everything that shows itself; when they have done one field, they get into their carriages and drive to the next, where the same amusement is carried on; then comes hot lunch at the nearest keeper's house, which lasts for an hour or more, and the afternoon sport is a repetition of the morning's. There is no stopping to pick up the game,—keepers are left behind for that, and are told to take their guns, so as to stop any cripples, the "writing between the lines" being in this case that they are to kill all they can, so as to make the bag sound better at the end of the day.

As partridge-shooting is one of the cheapest amusements, pheasant-shooting, on the other hand, is one of the dearest. What with feeding the young birds and doctoring them, and the constant watching they require when they are turned into the cover; and lastly, the large staff of beaters, the calculation of ten shillings per head for every one killed is not far beyond the mark. Pheasant-shooting can really only be managed by one method, and that is by having a body of well-trained beaters; so cunning are these birds that there is no chance of giving your friends the desired sport, if you do not have them. It is true a very pleasant day may often be had on the outskirts of your grounds by going round with some well-broken spaniels; but for real pheasant-shooting beaters are indispensable. A well-arranged and successful beat requires almost as much generalship as an Ashanti campaign. The covers must be watched from the earliest season, but the watchers must show themselves as little as possible; if the pheasants come out, they should put them back by rattling a stick or shaking some branches, for by showing themselves the chances are that the pheasants would fly off at once, but the rattle of a stick merely makes them run back into cover. Then the corners where they are to



rise must be netted most carefully, perfect silence being kept, and as little noise of any kind made as possible. When the beat has actually commenced not a point must be left unguarded, the smallest ditch or grip with grass in it must have a "stop" at it, and any hare or rabbit runs that there may be must be stopped also. The boys who act as "stops" have to be well drilled in their parts, just to keep a subdued kind of rattle with their two short sticks, and by no means to strike the bushes in cover—merely to use their sticks as a kind of castanet. In fact, pheasants are at once the keeper's greatest pride and greatest plague, from the time when he has to guard the wild birds' nests against egg-stealers, and to watch those brought up under hens—ever on the look-out for gapes or croup when they are quite young, and then when older, and turned into the covers, on the watch for poachers or vermin, until the grand shooting-day; and even until that is over his anxiety is unceasing. It is very difficult to prevent them straying, particularly in a district where there are many oaks, as they will, however well fed, roam after acorns. And then to insure there being a proper quantity of pheasants in the required places is no easy work. With all the pains possible, it is extraordinary how they will stray away.

Two instances of this straying propensity came under my individual notice.

I was staying with a large party at a friend's house for pheasant-shooting, and as the covers had not been beaten before, my friend was sanguine of some first-rate sport, knowing the large number of pheasants that had been reared, and the trouble that had been taken with them. We went out, and everything seemed to promise an excellent day's shooting; the pheasants were all reported safe the night before, and "stops" had been sent out early to prevent them straying, nets put down, and all complete. Well, the first cover that was beaten yielded only about thirty or forty pheasants, instead of three or four times that number, and the second and third the same. The host looked much annoyed, and his keeper almost heart-broken; and this kind of sport continued until the afternoon, when my friend called up the keeper, and in desperation ordered him to beat a small covert standing by itself about three-quarters of a mile off. The man said he did not think it was any use, as no pheasants were ever there; however, as his master wished it, it should be done, and he sent off some men to put down the nets very carefully. When we came up the under-keeper said there certainly were some pheasants there, though he had never known them



to be in that place before ; so we began, and very soon found that they had nearly all migrated from their usual quarters to this place, above four hundred being killed in this small cover. How they got there no one could guess ; there were not any connecting hedgerows or ploughed fields, and they had roosted in their usual places.

The second case occurred to myself. I wished to beat a small cover of my own of about four acres, as we knew there were some pheasants there, and being an outlying one it was not altogether safe ; so I gave orders that the place should be netted, and "stops," &c., sent out, and then went and beat it, but to my great surprise found scarcely anything. The keeper was utterly puzzled too ; we tried all the likely spots round with no result, and I came to the conclusion that some poachers must have beaten the wood very early that day. However, as we were going off, the quick eye of my keeper detected a pheasant running in an old grassy lane near, and we resolved to try this ; and well it was we did ; every bush and tuft of grass seemed to hold a pheasant, and we made a capital bag, killing all but one, to my keeper's great satisfaction. Several more were got than the number he had mentally put down for the cover to yield ; however, in this case we at length detected the way they had got out.

The end of the wood had been netted, and a "stop" put on one side where there was an old ditch; but on the other a little grip with long grass in it, leading from the cover across a field to the old lane, had been left unguarded, as the net was thought to have been fastened down so closely that nothing could get out; but the pheasants found the weak place, and undoubtedly strayed by it.

To insure a good day's pheasant-shooting, thoroughly trained beaters are absolutely necessary; and it is equally needful that the guns should remain where they are posted, or if they are to move, only do so exactly as the head-keeper directs. Nothing is more annoying, both to master and keeper, than having a good day spoiled because two or three of the guns will get together to hear or tell the last new story, and consequently let the pheasants escape by not being at their proper posts. If you have the good fortune to be placed by the net at the end of the beat, you will find that, besides having the best place for sport, great amusement can be derived by noticing the behaviour of the various kinds of game as they come up to it. Soon after you have taken your position, the rattle of sticks is heard, showing that the beat has begun, and shortly a suppressed shout indicates that a rabbit is up; for the best-trained beaters in England cannot resist giving



a shout at the sight of one, and if they are a scratch lot, the yells that greet its appearance could not be exceeded if half a dozen foxes had been unkennelled at once. They will allow a pheasant or woodcock or, in fact, any other kind of game, to get away silently; but a rabbit is too much for them—why, I do not know; but such is the fact. In a short time something may be heard coming very rapidly towards the net, and in a minute a splendid old cock-pheasant appears, who runs right up to it; then, suddenly catching sight of you, back he goes like a racehorse, and you hear the whirr as he rises on meeting the line of beaters, and the cry of “Mark back,” succeeded as a rule by two rapid shots, sometimes only by a single one, followed by a crash as he comes down through the trees. Next a lot of hen-pheasants come pattering along, crouching as they run with outstretched neck. These come up very quietly, and begin to examine the net closely, walking along it, trying whether they can find a place to pass underneath, and, if they do, they infallibly lead all the rest away; but, failing this, they squat down and become at once almost invisible; so exactly does their plumage assimilate itself to the dead leaves that, unless you happen to catch their eye, you would never detect them. Then come a lot of young cocks in a terrible

flurry, running here, there, and everywhere, occasionally twisting round like teetotums; these, too, at length squat, picking out tufts of brake or grass, where their dark heads are covered, and their back and long tail-feathers just match the stuff they are lying in. Presently some hares come along, and these are all listening so intently to the beaters, and looking back as well, that they blunder against the net, greatly to their astonishment; for they sit up and stare at it, and then trot away to see if they can make off by one of their usual runs; failing in this, they lie down in some of the thickest cover, hoping to escape by this plan. Numerous rabbits come hopping along, and, meeting the net, turn and hide themselves in stumps or any other place they can find. And really, as the beaters come nearer and nearer, you would never imagine the quantity of game there is; a novice would at once declare there was none, so absolutely motionless does it remain until it is forced up; and then, although you have been at the post all the time, the quantity seems quite astonishing. Pheasants begin to whirr up, at first by twos and threes, and then almost by scores at a time, and the firing is incessant; it seems now that every tuft of grass or piece of fern has a pheasant under it; but in spite of the beaters, several old cocks run back between them, being far too clever



to rise and be shot at, knowing that a beater may almost as well strike at a flash of lighting as at an old cock running.

I may here remark that some of these old cocks will often escape being killed season after season by some dodge or other. In a cover of my own there was an old cock-pheasant who lived between six and seven years, always escaping the guns. We used to drive this cover regularly to the same point, and just before the beaters had finished, this old fellow would get up close to the outside hedge, rising above the underwood as if he would give an excellent shot; but, just as you thought he was as good as bagged, closing his wings, he would drop into the field close to the hedge, turn round, and run back like a racer, hopping over the fence again into the cover just behind the beaters. He practised this dodge successfully for several years; but at length the keeper complained so much that he disturbed the cover, and would not let any other bird come near, that I had to devise means to kill him, which was effected by driving the cover the opposite way to which he was accustomed. The old fellow was so bewildered that he rose, gave a fair shot, and was killed. A more splendid bird than he was could scarcely have been seen—in full plumage, a broad and perfect white ring round his

neck, and spurs an inch long, and as sharp and hard as if they had been made of iron.

Very amusing it is, too, to watch the shooters. There stands one man, picking his birds, and dreading a miss for the sake of his reputation ; here is a greedy shot, firing at everything, blowing much of his game to pieces, for fear anyone else should get a shot ; and again, there is the keeper's horror and detestation—a man who sends off his birds wounded, as a rule hitting them, but very seldom killing one clean, with the exception of those that he utterly annihilates. Lookers-on are apt to laugh at sportsmen for missing pheasants, so large do they look, and such apparently easy shots do they give ; and until a person tries himself, he has no idea how fast they really do fly, or how easy it is to miss them.

Rabbit-shooting is capital sport ; indeed, none can be better for affording sport to a large Christmas-party in the country. Everybody enjoys it, and brightens up at the idea, from the schoolboy home for the holidays—who has been in and out of the house scores of times already to see how the weather looked, whether the beagles would be ready, or on some other wonderful pretext—to the old sportsman, who did not know whether he should come, but cannot resist the temptation, merely



trying at first to save his dignity by saying he should just come and see if any woodcocks were sprung, and ending in being as enthusiastic about it as the youngest. The "form" displayed by the shooters is diverse. There is the elderly gentleman who gets away by himself to a quiet corner, and is found at lunch-time with three or four mangled rabbits, none of them having been more than a couple of yards from his gun when they were shot. Then there is the man who will always fire both barrels; if he misses with the first, of course he tries with his second; but if he does hit the first time, discharges the second barrel as a sort of salute in honour of his successful first. And here is an amateur—this one usually a schoolboy or 'Varsity man—who fires at whatever he gets the slightest glimpse of; a robin flitting about amongst the brambles is safe to have a shot fired at it; and indeed the dogs, keepers, and shooters have all, in their turns, very narrow escapes from this gentleman: the position he has held is well and distinctly marked by the cut-down underwood and well-peppered trunks of trees. Then there is the sportsman, generally a great swell, who fires at everything he sees in the distance, and claims all game killed within a radius of a quarter of a mile. He cannot be induced to shoot at a rabbit or any game within

a reasonable distance, his excuse always being, "Choke-bore, my dear fellow—blow it to bits;" the fact being that he never hits anything except by accident, and fancies by this plan that he is not detected.

I once saw a capital trick played on a person of this kind by a couple of mischievous schoolboys. They procured a dead rabbit, and fixed it firmly in a lifelike position by means of sticks, &c.; then tying a long piece of string to each foreleg, they went and ensconced themselves behind two large trees in the cover, one on each side of the road, about seventy yards from the gentleman's stand. Putting down the rabbit, one of them drew it slowly across the road, the other giving a shout, which made their friend look round and immediately shoot at it, when the string was jerked and the rabbit fell on its side. Whilst he was reloading and fiddling with his gun, the rabbit was drawn away, and in a short time the game was played again; in the end about twenty shots were fired at it by the victim, not one of which touched it, and the string was only cut once. When lunch-time came, and the keeper went round to collect the rabbits, he was saluted by the gentleman with :

"Well, Smith, got my eye in to-day. Never saw such a gun; killed at least thirty rabbits straight off



crossing the road up there. Must have been one of their regular runs."

Off went the keeper to pick them up, and of course detected the trick at once. His good manners would not allow him to laugh there; so he had to make a bolt for it, and, to my great surprise, I saw this staid and serious head-keeper burst through the cover into the ride I was in, and begin to shout with laughter in the most uproarious manner. For a moment I thought he had gone mad, and on walking up to him could get nothing out of him, except between his fits of laughter, "Beg pardon, sir, but them 'limbs,' them two 'limbs!'" At last he got sufficiently calm to tell me what had occurred, and I need hardly say that I laughed almost as heartily. The indignation of the victim was great when he discovered the trick, and he stalked off to the house at once; and perhaps it was well that he did, for the two young scamps' account of the whole thing was enough to send anyone into fits. It is needless to say that they ever after occupied the foremost place in the keeper's affections.

It is, indeed, a very pretty sight to see a pack of beagles working in cover. How they try every tuft of grass or rushes! Soon you notice that they are working more eagerly, and some begin to lash their tails, and suddenly out bolts "bunny" from

his seat, sure to be saluted by a hasty shot from some one, not the least to its detriment, but a very narrow escape for the leading dogs. Away go the pack, making the woods ring with their tongues. Excited individuals race after them, often with their guns on full cock, and their fingers on the trigger. What their ideas may be in this performance is difficult to say, but I suppose it is the effect of that temporary insanity that seizes many people at the sight of a rabbit. As a rabbit invariably runs a ring, and returns to its starting-place, there is not the least use, except for the sake of the exercise, in trying to follow it; and the first one put up is safe to run his ring, as the good shots will not fire at him, that the youngsters may have a chance, and the indifferent shots are sure to miss the first through excitement. You hear plenty of shots whilst the dogs are running, as other rabbits, frightened by their noise and passage, bolt from their seats and scuttle about everywhere. Besides these, a few old cock-pheasants, who have strayed from the preserves, are sure to be found and shot. You shortly hear a shot from the cover the rabbit was found in, followed by "Who-whoop!" showing that the hunted one has been killed.

The keeper then begins to draw afresh, and you may notice that certain of the older sportsmen are



very attentive to the hounds whilst drawing, the reason being, as is soon evident, that they hope a woodcock may be flushed, and their hopes are usually realised. If you mark one beagle poking about by himself, sniffing along, evidently on scent, yet not opening, you may be pretty sure he is on a woodcock. But very soon another rabbit is found, and away goes the pack, this time not quite so steadily, as the number of rabbits up tempt the younger hounds after them. However, this adds (except in the opinion of the staid elders) to the sport ; and soon, by the noise of the beagles' tongues and the rapid shooting, it appears as if every hound had a rabbit to himself. There certainly must be some "sweet little cherub" sitting "up aloft," who protects rabbit-shooters and beagles, so reckless does the shooting always appear. Here you see an excited youth fire at a rabbit not a yard in front of the dog. How he manages to miss both seems incomprehensible, but he does. There another rushes round a corner, and blazes both barrels at one, just in a line with another gun, and only a few yards from him ; but he escapes too. In a word, rabbit-shooting with beagles is one of the most amusing, but at the same time one of the most dangerous, sports going.

The advance of civilisation and cultivation has

almost entirely spoiled snipe and wild-fowl shooting. In the districts where, thirty years ago, ducks might be found by dozens and snipe in swarms, the former are extinct; and as for the latter, if there happens to be one, it flies off before you are within half a mile of it, as if it was ashamed of being seen in such a place. I well remember the capital shooting I used to get in Berkshire. There was a large swampy common of several hundred acres, all rough sedgy grass and rushes; on one side was a wide ditch full of twists and turns, with high reedy banks, and at the further end a narrow tributary of the Thames, with beds of water-rushes on both sides; and on the other side were acres of small meadows of from six to ten acres, divided by high hawthorn hedges and deep wide ditches. It was a real "happy hunting-ground" for anyone fond of the sport, and many have been the long days that I and my retriever passed on it. The common itself was invariably full of snipe, and they behaved themselves properly in those days, not rising and going off in whisps directly you appeared, but trying to be shot at decently, like respectable birds. Then the ditch and river were sure to hold ducks; and after you had hunted the common, it was very exciting work, creeping up the various well-known curves and turns in the ditch, where the ducks usually remained,



my dog creeping after me, quite as much interested as I was myself, and showing most wonderful intelligence in avoiding stepping on any little pieces of thin ice or anything that would make a noise; then the careful look over the bank, and if the stalk had been successful, the rapid double shot at the ducks, as they rose with a rush, followed by the drop of killed or wounded, if the shot had been lucky, and the subsequent hunt after the cripples, if unfortunately there were any, for nothing on earth is so difficult to get as a wounded duck. The way they will dive, and the time they can keep under water, only rising and putting the tip of their beak up to get air, and the extraordinary places they get into, will puzzle the best retriever, and weary out his master's patience, unless he has a very large stock of that, or obstinacy, in his composition. But very often, when I peered cautiously over the bank, the ducks could just be seen swimming away down a further reach of the ditch, making for the larger stream below, and then it was a race as to which should get there first, as the cunning birds knew as well as I did that if they once got there, and into the reed-beds, they were comparatively safe. It was no joke, running as hard as you could go, in a stooping position, for several hundred yards; and often they would escape me, an unfortunate step on

a piece of thin ice, or a stick, making them rise, and I then had the pleasure of seeing them fly off and drop into a reed-bed half a mile off, which I could not get at.

I had often been warned that the ditch was dangerous, and proved it on one occasion, very nearly to my cost. Some ducks dropped into a rushy pool in a field on the opposite side of it, and as I should have had a walk of a mile to get round to them, I determined to try and cross, fortunately for myself selecting a place where there was a stout young willow; so putting down my gun, and catching firm hold of the tree, I put one leg into the ditch, and soon found, though it passed down through the mud above my knee, that no bottom was to be found, and on trying to withdraw it, discovered that my leg was fixed as if in a vice. Fortunately the willow was strong, and having one leg on the bank, after pulling until I thought the other must be dislocated, I succeeded in extricating myself.

But the meadows on the further side were where the best sport used to be got. These, as I have said, were divided by large hawthorn hedges fully twelve feet high, and intersected by deep ditches full of reeds, with an open pool here and there. The meadows, too, had narrow gutters cut in them



to act as drains, I believe, and these abounded with snipe; and after you had flushed the common ones, if you hunted carefully a good many jacks could be found. The ditches were very good for ducks. By help of the hedges you could get up to them unperceived, and many a fine mallard I got here. Hares were also fond of the rough grass, and partridges might usually be found in the middle of the day. I remember bagging one December day six and a half couple of ducks, eleven couple of snipe, besides some jacks, three hares, and three and a half brace of birds. This does not sound much, but to me it was a thoroughly enjoyable day. No keeper following at one's heels, full of advice, but just going where and how I pleased; then the successful stalk after ducks, and the unexpected luck with partridges and hares, in addition to the snipe, have indelibly impressed this day on my memory. Being in this neighbourhood a short time ago, I went down to look at my favourite ground, and found that the large marshy common, with a few donkeys and some wretched cows trying to get a living off it, had been drained, and subdivided by neat post and rail fences, and sheep were grazing where snipe used to abound. The only thing unchanged was the old ditch. I suppose it is all right, but I prefer the ducks and snipe.

Many years ago very fair duck-shooting, and some snipe as well, might be got on the Thames between Marlow and Windsor, and this was a very luxurious kind of wild-fowl shooting; for all you had to do was to hire a punt and a good puntsman who knew the river well, and, wrapping yourself up comfortably in a warm coat, drop down the river, going into the quiet back waters and round the eyot-beds. In favourable weather a good many ducks might be found, and it was curious to notice how they would hide themselves under the banks where they were undermined by the stream, and the roots of the osiers hung down. An old mallard would constantly stay until fairly poked out; and often when you thought you had tried them thoroughly, after you left an old fellow would rise and go quacking off. The eyot-beds were favourite places for snipe; but you could not do much with these unless with a steady old dog, who would poke slowly all over the place, the stumps and stalks of the osiers entirely preventing any walking. But now, I believe, this style of shooting is at an end.

My last attempt at duck-shooting was very exciting, in fact rather too much so. A friend, who knew my weakness for it, wrote and asked me to come to his house, as I could get capital flight-shooting close to his place. Of course I went, and in the evening



we started for the river, which was much flooded, and embarking in a boat, I was soon landed on a small mound in the middle of the floods, about twelve feet square, and was told it was a first-rate place, as the ducks, in their flight from some large ponds about five miles off, always passed over it. I was also told I might be sure to know when they were coming by the flashes of the guns of other wild fowlers on the banks some miles away. A whistle was given me to signal for the boat when I wanted it, and I was left alone in my glory. It was very cold, and my island was too small for exercise. Soon a flash caught my eye, and then the report of a gun fired some miles off came to my ears, soon followed by a succession of flashes and reports from gunners posted along each side of the river. The effect was very pretty, and I admired it greatly, until an idea struck me that there might be guns posted on the bank behind. Just then some ducks came along, and I fired rapidly at them; almost simultaneously came two reports from the bank, and some heavy charges of shot cut up the water all round; in addition something weighty struck the ground just in my rear, covering me with mud. Instantly blowing my whistle, the boat soon came, and on landing I saw two men, one of whom coming up asked me where I had been. I told him "on

the mound"; to which he rejoined, "Was you, really? Lor, now, if I didn't think it was the miller's old donkey! and, thinks I, if the aggravating old beast gets there, a shot or two won't hurt un, and teach him not to get there again; so I lets 'goo' when the ducks comes along. There, and so 'twas you, sir; lor, now, to think of that!" and the old fellow went off into a series of chuckles.

His gun was an extraordinary one—a single barrel, something like four feet long, about eight bore. I asked what charge he put in, and he showed me a measure that held at least four drachms of powder, and another that would contain about three ounces of number two shot. This was how he loaded, and in addition, he said, he always put in a couple of pistol-shots—"they did bring anything down so sweet that they hit." So these were the pleasant things I heard strike the ground just behind me. I went home at once, thankful that I had not been bagged.













